

Southern New Hampshire University

To Resist, Demoralize, and Sustain:

Korean War Special Operations and the Development of US Army Special Warfare Capabilities

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in History

By

Erin E. Thompson

Warroad, Minnesota

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April 5, 2022

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Associate Dean of Liberal Arts  
Southern New Hampshire University

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Date

## **Abstract**

The Korean War changed everything about the military's approach to warfare. After World War II, some military strategists turned towards unconventional methods, including psychological and guerrilla warfare. Implementing these styles in Korea between 1950–1953 created an entirely new program within the US Army and advanced the military's methodology into the modern era. The triumphs and failures of Korean War psychological and unconventional warfare operations significantly impacted the development of the US Army Special Forces that emerged in the mid-1950s and the creation of the US Army Special Warfare Center and School.

An examination of military and academic studies of the Army's forays into special operations and the creation of US Army Special Forces units suggest several factors which influenced these changes to military theory. The post-World War II military downsizing, political in-fighting between military branches and the government, and the growing Cold War tensions gave way to the shocking force of the North Korean People's Army in 1950. Proponents of psychological and unconventional warfare quickly began developing various programs to increase the Army's access to intelligence and incorporate new techniques of fighting an enemy. The problems which plagued the Army's psychological and unconventional warfare developments in Korea created the necessary pressure to develop a Special Warfare training school. US Army Special Warfare was born in Korea.

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iv
List of Figures .....	vi
Acknowledgments .....	vii
List of Abbreviations .....	viii
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: Historical Analysis .....	11
Chapter 2: The Cold War Intelligence Crisis .....	28
Chapter 3: Eighth Army Psychological Warfare in Korea, 1950–1953 .....	37
Chapter 4: Early Cold War Unconventional Warfare, 1950–1951 .....	48
Chapter 5: Eighth Army Partisan Warfare, 1951–1954 .....	64
Chapter 6: The Psychological Warfare School & US Army Special Warfare Center .....	92
Conclusion .....	100
Appendix: Partisan Airborne Operations, 1951–1953 .....	104
Bibliography .....	105

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1 Table of Distribution of Assignments of Ranger Companies in Korea.....	57
Figure 2 Organization of Attrition Section, January 1951.....	67
Figure 3 Initial Evaluation of Partisan Activity Objectives.....	69
Figure 4 Partisan Activities by Type, May–Nov 1951 .....	75
Figure 5 Partisan Activities by Type, Dec 1951–Mar 1953 .....	84

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Finally, this work would not be possible without the hard work, dedication, and faith of the US Army Special Forces pioneers. Their efforts shaped modern warfare and irrevocably changed the nature of US Army military strategy. These brave men and women deserve the credit for developing the programs outlined in this paper.

## **List of Abbreviations**

CCF	Chinese Communist Forces
CCRAK	Combined Command for Reconnaissance Activities, Korea
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COI	Office of the Coordinator of Information
EUSAK	Eighth United States Army, Korea
FEC	Far East Command
G-2	General Staff Office 2, Intelligence Division
G-3	General Staff Office 3, Operations Division
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KMAG	US-Korean Military Advisory Group
NKPA	North Korean People's Army
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
ROK	Republic of Korea
SAG	(Far East Command) Special Activities Group
UNPIK	United Nations Partisan Infantry, Korea



## Introduction

Special Warfare in the US Army is a relatively new division of America's modern armed forces. World War II saw the emergence of psychological and covert warfare in primarily conventional military settings. However, after the war, little development in the Army's command and strategy changed to embrace unconventional methods in its training programs or against an enemy force. The Army established the Psychological Warfare Division in 1950 and only added it to its formal training institute at Fort Bragg during the Korean War in 1952. The correlation between the Army's activities in Korea and the establishment of the Psywar Division represents the first step towards accepting Special Forces and unconventional methodology in Army training.<sup>1</sup> The Army renamed the school the US Army Special Warfare School in 1956, following several years of development in military-strategic theory. It also highlighted the change in focus from purely psychological warfare to embracing all forms of special operations. This study examines how special operations performed during the Korean War contributed to the acceptance of irregular warfare in the US Army and the development of the US Army Special Warfare Center.

Understanding the development of US Army Special Forces requires understanding the terminology. Military and civilian academics use "unconventional warfare" and "guerrilla warfare" interchangeably. Unconventional warfare techniques involve guerrilla operations and subversive methods performed within enemy territory by indigenous persons, supported or

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<sup>1</sup> Fort Bragg is one of the largest military installations in the world and is the location of the US Army Special Operations Command Headquarters.

directed by US military forces.<sup>2</sup> Guerrilla warfare is a strategy wherein a “strategically weaker side assumes the tactical offensive in selected forms, times, and places.”<sup>3</sup> Offensively weak armies use irregular methods to overcome the inequality in force and size of stronger militaries. This type of warfare became more widely studied by military academics in the mid-twentieth century when it became the prominent method of revolutionary warfare in Southeast Asia and South America. The emergence of Maoist guerrilla theory influenced the new political dimension of guerrilla warfare in the Cold War. According to Mao Zedong, guerrilla warfare cannot operate solely as a military organization. Mao asserted that guerrilla warfare is a component of overall “revolutionary struggle” and that its use comes as “the inevitable result of the clash between oppressor and oppressed.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, guerrilla warfare provides 1) a means of military strategy to obtain intelligence and defend against a larger army and 2) a means of obtaining a Marxist revolution in a nation.

Special operations involve more than guerrilla tactics. Psychological warfare is also an essential factor in irregular military operations. Like guerrilla warfare, historical examples of psychological warfare abound. Psywar operations engage in effective means of persuasion to provoke a specific reaction from one’s audience. Psywar typically falls into two categories. Strategic psywar is a broad effort to influence enemies and allies “but without direct intention to affect any particular tactical situation, and without any such effect in measurable quantity.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alfred H. Paddock, *US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins*, Revised edition (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Paddock, 112.

<sup>4</sup> Mao Zedong, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 41.

<sup>5</sup> George Pettee, *US Psywar Operations in the Korean War* (Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington: Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, 1951), 38.

Tactical psywar involves unambiguous methods of influence targeting a specific audience, circumstance, time and place, enemy motivation, or desired behavioral response.<sup>6</sup> Recognizable forms of military psychological operations involve the dropping of leaflets over enemy territory, radio broadcasting, loudspeaker announcements, and other means of propaganda. “White propaganda” pertains to materials that truthfully address a without a strong bias towards one party. “Black propaganda” intentionally disguises its purpose and, in many cases, hides the source.

The term “Special Forces” or “Special Operations Forces” did not appear in any formal military doctrine until the mid-twentieth century. Special Forces units engage in activities involving unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, and psychological warfare. The focus of this paper is the formation of the Army Special Forces program in 1950. This should not be confused with the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) that formed in the 1980s as an independent Theater Command to oversee the activities of all American military Special Forces. Special Forces groups operate differently from other elite organizations in the military. Where Army Rangers or Navy SEALs might employ unconventional tactics and act covertly in hostile territory, Special Forces deal more closely with the overlap between social, political, and military aspects of modern warfare. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

Special operations forces (SOF) provide a versatile military capability to defend vital US national interests and must be capable of conducting missions in pursuit of national military, political, economic or psychological objectives. They are an

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<sup>6</sup> Pettee, 39.

integral part of the total defense posture of the United States and are a strategic instrument of national policy.<sup>7</sup>

The JCS expects Special Forces to employ means outside conventional military operations and often find themselves politically and economically motivated. The use of non-military force and indigenous personnel separate these efforts from other military units. The most significant difference between Special Forces and other elite military groups is the connection forged between the military and native partisans.

The term “partisan” often appears interchangeably with “guerilla.” Partisan forces are armed groups of individuals indigenous to a region whose activities occur within an occupied nation. Such groups became widely known for their resistance activities in various countries during World War II. However, their interactions with warfare and conventional militaries have occurred frequently throughout history, as explored in chapter one. While organizations like the Office of Strategic Services supported some of these resistance movements in World War II, the US military only officially began assisting guerrillas during the Korean War. The importance of partisans towards developing US Army special operations capabilities is examined in chapter five.

Several primary sources provide an in-depth analysis of unconventional warfare operations during the Korean war. The Operations Research Office (ORO) supplied its evaluation of these operations in *UN Partisan Warfare in Korea, 1951–1954*, which details the mission objectives, training, and outcome of partisan activities in Korea. The ORO is an essential resource for academic and field studies of the relevant Korean War unconventional activities.

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<sup>7</sup> JCS Publication Number 2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)* dated 1 December 1986, quoted in Steve Fondacaro, *Strategic Analysis of US Special Operations during the Korean Conflict* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College, 1988), 8.

Arthur Daley, an officer with the US Army Military History Detachment, produced an analysis of partisan activities in *UN Partisan Forces in the Korean Conflict, 1951–1952*. This report includes the organization and structure of the special operations units and interviews with US Army staff who worked directly with the partisans, Army commanders who organized these operations, and individual North Korean guerrillas. For the US Army’s doctrine on the organization of guerrilla warfare operations, I consulted the Army Field Manual 31-21, *Organization and Conduct of Guerrilla Warfare*. Finally, I refer to Martin Blumenson, et al.’s *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict and Their Solutions* to explain how Eighth Army special operations supported intelligence operations in the Far East.

Other primary sources cited in this work detail the Army’s psychological warfare operations. The ORO published George Pettee’s analysis of Eighth Army psywar operations in *US Psywar Operations in the Korean War*. Pettee’s research is commonly referenced in secondary texts on Eighth Army Psywar capabilities, making it a critical reference for this work. Wilmoore Kendall et al.’s *Eighth Army Psychological Warfare in the Korean War* provides clear insight into the significant psywar projects that occurred during the Korean War. I consulted the Eighth Army G-3 Psychological Warfare Division *Report on the Psychological Warfare Conducted by the Eighth Army Units in Korea, 25 June 1950 through 27 July 1953*, and the Army’s official Field Manual 33-5, *Psychological Operations: Techniques and Procedures*. The G-3 report offers the perspective of the military’s intelligence branch on the uses of psywar in Korea. FM 33-5 provides the objectives and strategic theories underlying psywar operations in combat.

These primary sources all came from official military or political research offices. They speak directly to the impact of the Korean War on unconventional and psychological warfare

objectives within the military. The military's promotion of extensive studies, especially on such small-scale operations as the partisan groups, indicates their importance to the Army's Special Warfare development. The changes made to later insurgency and counterinsurgency training materials support the conclusion that Korea's special operations failures influenced the Army's development of unconventional methods.

Also crucial to this study are several autobiographical sources that provide information on the Army's special operations in Korea. Colonel Aaron Bank, a leading figure in US Special Warfare development, provided his account of his World War II and Cold War experiences in *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces*. His material is instrumental in understanding the origins of the first Army Special Forces Group, the 10<sup>th</sup> SFG.<sup>8</sup> General Mark Clark's *From the Danube to the Yalu* details Clark's work within the intelligence community and his influence on the development of US Army intelligence from World War I through the Korean War. Clark served as the Command in Chief of the Far East from 1952–1953. Dr. John W. Connor provided his experience with the 1st Raider Company during its short life between 1950–1951 in *Let Slip the Dogs of War: A Memoir of the GHQ 1st Raider Company*. Colonel Ben Malcom's *White Tigers: My Secret War in Korea* details Malcom's personal experiences in the training and implementation of anti-communist partisan forces and the failures of the US Army, UN, and intelligence command in employing them. These books support the argument that special operations in Korea failed primarily because of the lack of a formal command structure and experienced personnel. The authors of these resources are highly respected members of the

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<sup>8</sup> Aaron Bank, *From OSS to Green Berets: The Birth of Special Forces* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1986), 171.

military community and are frequently cited by other historians researching special operations and intelligence gathering in Korea.

Alongside these primary sources is a multitude of research produced on special operations and covert activities during the early Cold War. Richard Aldrich, et al.'s *The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945–65*, Matthew Aid's "US HUMINT and COMINT in the Korean War," Peter G. Knight's "MacArthur's Eyes": Reassessing Military Intelligence in the Forgotten War, June 1950–April 1951," provide the basis for the problems that arose post-World War II and establish the need for specialized units in the early Cold War. Numerous resources evaluate how the US Army developed its unconventional methods. Philip Taylor's *Munition of the Mind: A History of Propaganda* focuses on psychological warfare from a broad perspective of its use in military conflicts throughout history. Books specifically related to the Korean War psychological warfare operations include Stephen Pease's *Psywar: Psychological Warfare in Korea, 1950-1953*, highlighting how the UN, American, and Communist militaries employed propaganda throughout the war. Dr. Stanley Sandler's "*Cease Resistance: It's Good for You!*": *A History of US Army Combat Psychological Operations* explores the various methods and developments in the Army's psywar arsenal from the American Revolution through Operation Desert Storm. Finally, Alfred Paddock's *US Army Special Warfare: Its Origins* is an unmatched study on the creation of the US Army Psychological Warfare School and the doctrine used to train future military staff, especially in psychological operations. Nearly every source in this bibliography in some way references Paddock's research.

Books which reference the shifting focus in the US Army regarding Special Warfare include Frank R. Barnett, et al.'s *Special Operations in US Strategy*, Ian Sutherland's *Special Forces of the United States Army, 1952–82*, Stanley Sandler's *To Free from Oppression: A*

*Concise History of US Army Special Forces*, and Joel Nadel and J. R. Wright's *Special Men and Special Missions: Inside American Special Operations Forces, 1945 to the Present*. Sources evaluating the performance of special operations in Korea include Steve Fondacaro's *Strategic Analysis of US Special Operations during the Korean Conflict*, Michael E. Haas' *In the Devil's Shadow: UN Special Operations during the Korean War*, Richard Kiper's "Unconventional Warfare in Korea: Forgotten Aspects of the 'Forgotten War'," and Rod Paschall's *A Study in Command and Control: Special Operations in Korea, 1951–1953*. Sources that focus on specific organizations and unit histories include Robert Black's *Rangers in Korea*, Ed Evanhoe's *Darkmoon: Eighth Army Special Operations in the Korean War*, Michael Haas' *Apollo's Warriors: US Air Force Special Operations during the Cold War*, Richard Kiper's *Spare Not the Brave: The Special Activities Group in Korea*, Lawrence Schuetta's *Guerrilla Warfare and Airpower in Korea, 1950–1953*, and Joe C. Watts' *Korean Nights: The 4th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) 1950–1951*.

This paper does not represent an in-depth evaluation of every psychological or unconventional warfare activity during the Korean conflict. Rather, this paper studies the specific ways that psywar and unconventional methods challenged the military's understanding of warfare in the mid-twentieth century and how the US Army Special Warfare School emerged to handle these changes. Current literature on the Army's Special Forces development often separates the evolution of psychological warfare from unconventional warfare. Likewise, many narratives of the Army's Special Forces often ignore crucial incidents during the Korean War to study the implementation of Special Forces units in Vietnam. By examining the similar problems of psychological and irregular warfare development in the Korean War, this paper concludes that



the US Army Special Warfare School and Center—which remains open today—formed to solve the problems of special operations strategy as it occurred in the early Cold War.

The title of this paper comes from a quote by Gen. Robert McClure, the leading figure in Army Psychological Warfare development. McClure claimed that the American military employed psychological warfare “to undermine the enemy's will to resist, demoralize his forces and sustain the morale of our supporters.”<sup>9</sup> These themes of resistance, demoralization, and longevity persist throughout the special operations activities of the 1950s. The first chapter outlines the historical significance of psychological and unconventional warfare within the US military. It also focuses on the military’s attitude towards these activities throughout the World Wars. The second chapter analyzes the specific intelligence problems that occurred in the lead-up to the Cold War, giving context for the challenges that befell psywar and unconventional warfare progress between 1950–1953.

Chapter three examines the development of the Army’s Psychological Warfare Division and introduces some of the characters whose work brought about the creation of the Army Special Forces. Chapter four looks at the early unconventional warfare attempts between 1950–1951, namely the Army Raider companies and the Eighth Army Rangers. Chapter five studies the Army’s forays into partisan warfare from 1951–1953, a significant time in Army Special Warfare experience that dealt with indigenous tribes and operating deep within enemy territory. Finally, chapter six examines how the important problems of psywar and unconventional warfare operations during the Korean War became the impetus for creating a training school to fix and further expand the Army’s special operations capabilities.

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<sup>9</sup> Paddock, 12.

The Army's road to Special Warfare did not run smoothly. Special operations activities challenged the US military at a time of social upheaval, political division, and military unpreparedness. As the first modern conflict in the nuclear age, the Korean War differed greatly from all previous wars fought by the American military. As the line between civilian and soldier—combatant and noncombatant—blurred, military strategists worked diligently to produce new methods to match the unknown territory of the post-World War conflict. The result was an entirely new military unit that did what conventional armies could not, and modern warfare changed forever.

## **Chapter 1: Historical Analysis**

Psychological and unconventional warfare occurred in almost every military conflict in history. Though used for different purposes, militaries and guerrillas often employ these tactics jointly to serve a single purpose or objective. Military theorists frequently debate their use in traditional military operations. The way military theorists and strategists in traditional military organizations view psywar and unconventional methods varied according to the historical context of its use. Understanding the US Army command's mindset at the dawn of the Cold War requires understanding the tradition and development of psychological and unconventional operations in American military history.

Throughout history, the US Army favored psychological warfare more than other irregular tactics. This is partly due to the observable benefits psywar provides; unconventional warfare tended to produce small, often undetectable shifts in behavior that the Army found challenging to document. The visible benefits of psychological warfare included the surrender of thousands of POWs in World War I and II through propaganda. The Army also carefully tracked enemy troop movements to determine the effectiveness of psychological warfare on enemy morale and activities. Psychological warfare operations often produced facts and statistics to support their use. Likewise, psywar operations and the materials they create involve a tangible methodology in using language and pictures to elicit an emotional response in an audience. Compared to the myriad of unconventional warfare tactics developed over centuries and the covert nature of such operations, the evident results of psywar activities provided a clearer picture of its benefit to the war effort post-World War II.

Unlike irregular and guerrilla warfare methods, the history of psywar theory and practice is more positive. Modern audiences perceive the word “propaganda” with a layer of skepticism or hostility. However, historian Philip Taylor argues that prior to the twentieth century, “propaganda” referred to the discourses between “the converted” and “the unconverted,” or, in the case of the Bolsheviks in the early twentieth century, a discussion between “the converted and the already converted.”<sup>1</sup> People did not always perceive propaganda—or any other means by which an entity persuades an audience—as inherently bad or manipulative.

Psychological warfare has appeared in nearly every American military conflict since the country’s inception. The American rebels employed propaganda during the War of Independence, urging British and Hessian soldiers to forsake their duties to the Crown. Many prominent revolutionaries published newsletters and booklets supporting colonial resistance.<sup>2</sup> In the American Civil War, the military employed fewer psychological materials. Instead, the telegraph allowed journalists and war correspondents to produce materials detailing the horrors of slavery and war.<sup>3</sup> The notable lack of Union or Confederate military propaganda stemmed in part from the Armies’ inability to counteract the brutality of war depicted in letters and news reports.<sup>4</sup> Propaganda of this period aimed at the political, social, and economic reasons for the conflict, rather than the military benefits of winning or losing.

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<sup>1</sup> Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2003), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Alex Tuckness, “Discourses of Resistance in the American Revolution,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64, no. 4 (October 2003), 548.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Sandler, *“Cease Resistance: It’s Good for You!”: A History of US Army Combat Psychological Operations*, 2nd edition (United States Army Special Operations Command, 1988), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, 169.

Military theorists up to the twentieth century perceived unconventional warfare far more negatively than psywar. However, there is far more record of guerrilla activities in traditional military conflicts throughout history than psychological warfare. Guerrilla warfare describes various techniques and strategies used to support uprisings within colonial territories, wars between social classes, tribal warfare, or rear operations parallel to frontline activities. Unconventional warfare is only new in the sense that it was “forgotten or ignored by formalized 18th century armies.”<sup>5</sup> In most instances before the twentieth century, formal militaries saw guerrilla activities as treasonous, as they broke “political faith,” and were “punishable, like the ordinary treason of rebels and spies, by death.”<sup>6</sup> The British hanged Nathan Hale, the famous martyr of the American Revolution, for the crime of spy craft; the American rebels later hanged John Andre, the head of British intelligence, for similar reasons. The more aggressive forms of American unconventional warfare are often traced back to the guerrilla methods employed by Rogers’ Rangers during this period, though Rogers served as a British officer during the Revolution.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sandler, *To Free from Oppression: A Concise History of US Army Special Forces, Civil Affairs, Psychological Operations, and the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School* (Fort Bragg, US Army Special Operations Command, 1994), 5.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 177.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Rogers’ Rangers gained notoriety during the French and Indian War for their raiding and assault tactics, learned from allied Stockbridge and Mohican tribesmen. During the American Revolution, Robert Rogers offered his services to George Washington, but was instead arrested. He later served as a colonel in the Queen’s Rangers, though his status as a respected military commander was greatly diminished due to significant personal debts and alcoholism. The “Rules of Rogers’ Rangers” which outline the foundation of unconventional operations using military force continue to serve as a lesson for modern Special Operations study. Al Carroll, “They Kill Indians Mostly, Don’t They?”: Rogers’ Rangers and the Adoption of Indian Tactics,” *Medicine Bags and Dog Tags: American Indian Veterans from Colonial Times to the Second Iraq War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 38–39; Joel Nadel and J. R. Wright, *Special Men and Special Missions: Inside American Special Operations Forces, 1945 to the Present* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), 21.

American soldiers practiced guerrilla warfare during the Civil War on both sides. John Singleton Mosby, arguably the most infamous guerrilla of the American Civil War, used unconventional methods on behalf of the Confederacy. Although his tactics differed from modern interpretations of special operations, they encompassed some of the hallmarks of later partisan operations of the twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> These activities included raiding enemy encampments and ambushing unsuspecting Union troops. His actions produced significant psychological effects on Union troops, creating “the illusion of ubiquity, the fear that he might appear anywhere at any time.”<sup>9</sup> These effects were exponentially worse due to the documented cases of sleep deprivation suffered by troops throughout the war. Sleep deprivation caused by moonlight raids and attacks remains a prominent tactic of modern unconventional warfare.

During the Spanish-American War at the turn of the twentieth century, the Army experienced large influxes of Filipino guerrillas, led by revolutionary Emilio Aguinaldo.<sup>10</sup> Aguinaldo’s assassination of Andres Bonifacio put him in charge of the insurgent forces in the Philippines in 1897. He centralized the insurgents (rebels) to the island of Luzon and began engaging in guerrilla campaigns against the colonial government’s attempts at counterinsurgency.<sup>11</sup> American forces learned how to repel these forces, but the politics of the conflict made theoretical progress in the military a secondary concern. Despite re-learning

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<sup>8</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> James A. Ramage, *Gray Ghost: The Life of Col. John Singleton Mosby* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 2–3.

<sup>10</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Ivan Khilko, “The Philippines (1899–1902),” *Money in the Bank: Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*. RAND Counterinsurgency Study, Paper 4, by Angel Rabasa, et al., prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (RAND Corporation, 2007), 7.

counter-guerrilla methods during the conflict, later military reforms and the theories that guided military training ignored the changing nature of warfare towards the irregular fighter.

Military theoreticians and strategists have opposed unconventional warfare for numerous reasons. For centuries, they rejected irregular warfare for its unreliable characteristics. Most guerrillas lacked leadership, training, and discipline.<sup>12</sup> Political and social theorists like Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels believed that guerrilla warfare was an untrustworthy use of military force and not a way to succeed in a revolutionary struggle.<sup>13</sup> Strategists also thought unconventional warfare was a drain on military resources.<sup>14</sup> Materials and support afforded to specialized units or guerrillas decreased the allotment given to regular units. Furthermore, many strategists perceived guerrilla warfare as a weak alternative to conventional military strength. Standard militaries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries believed unconventional warfare could not succeed without the support of conventional armies. Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri Jomini, both notable theorists of the Napoleonic period, asserted that guerrilla warfare acted as “an auxiliary to regular military forces” and not as an independent military activity.<sup>15</sup>

Although the US Army did not engage in irregular warfare in World War I, it continued using psychological warfare through its Military Intelligence Branch. The branch’s Propaganda Section studied enemy propaganda and prepared briefings on the best counterpropaganda to use against them. The American Expeditionary Force (AEF) General Headquarters produced and

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<sup>12</sup> Lewis H. Gann, *Guerrillas in History* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1971), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Egan, “Marxism and Guerrilla Warfare,” *The Dialectic of Position and Maneuver: Understanding Gramsci’s Military Metaphor, Studies in Critical Social Sciences*, Vol 94 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Publishers, 2016), 89–90.

<sup>14</sup> Robert Black, *Rangers in Korea* (New York: Ivy Books, 1989), 197.

<sup>15</sup> Azeem Ibrahim, “Conceptualisation of Guerrilla Warfare,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 15, no. 3 (2004): 113.

disseminated propaganda materials in France between 1917–1918.<sup>16</sup> As with previous wars, Dr. Stanley Sandler stated that no leaflets were as effective as those “promising good treatment,” which “seemed to garner the most live enemy troops, judging from stockade interrogations.”<sup>17</sup> During this period, America honed its talent for propaganda and effected an apparent positive response from enemy troops. In the last three months of World War I, AEF dropped approximately three million leaflets over German lines.

Despite the experiences gained in psychological warfare during the First World War, the US military discontinued the Military Intelligence Bureau, Army G-2’s Psychological Warfare Section, and AEF’s Propaganda Section. Thus, on the eve of World War II, the US Army had no intelligence or psychological warfare office. The Army hastily established their intelligence office, the Psychological Warfare Branch, and implemented the Mobile Radio Broadcast and Leaflet Companies under the direction of the Army’s Theater Commander. In Europe and the Mediterranean, the Psychological Warfare Branch operated as a combined organization of US and British personnel, containing “a large number of civilians from the OSS, as well as the Office of War Information, the (British) Ministry of Information and the BBC.”<sup>18</sup> The Army’s psywar division came about only through the personal interest of Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy. However, during World War II, the most recognizable ventures into military psywar activities occurred at the Theater Command level, not within the Army itself.

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Office of the Coordinator of Information (COI) and installed Col. William J. Donovan as its director. COI emerged from

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<sup>16</sup> Sandler, *Cease Resistance*, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 36–37.



Donovan's experiences in World War I with the British Political Warfare Executive and Special Operations Executive agencies. Donovan believed in the benefits of creating a US intelligence agency from the myriad of intelligence offices scattered amongst the State Department and the US military. COI initially included two main sections, Research and Analysis and the Foreign Information Service. The Research and Analysis section examined intelligence from miscellaneous sources and pinpointed strategic areas for combat and propaganda operations. The Foreign Information Service produced the propaganda materials used in these areas. COI became the first organized venture by the US into "espionage, propaganda, subversion and related activities under the aegis of a centralized intelligence agency."<sup>19</sup> However, as with many intelligence agencies created amid war, COI went through many changes over the next few years.

Since the US military's psywar endeavors operated at the Theater Command level, the commanders of the European and Pacific Theaters directed all psywar activities. In the Pacific Theater, US psywar capabilities developed from the example given by the Far Eastern Liaison Office. This Australian military unit employed psychological and propaganda operations to "lower the enemy's morale, mislead him about Allied military intentions, and gain the support of civilians in enemy-occupied territories."<sup>20</sup> The establishment of the Psychological Warfare Branch, Southwest Pacific Area sought to induce enemy surrender via propaganda and leaflet drops. Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Pacific Theater Commander, appointed Brig. Gen. Bonner F. Fellers as head of this psywar branch, formerly employed by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The early efforts failed to incite rebellion among the Japanese since most enemy troops

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<sup>19</sup> Paddock, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Paddock, 10.

thought American propaganda inherently false.<sup>21</sup> However, Fellers' decision to use psywar methods to divide the Japanese militarists from those loyal to the emperor proved effective in garnering Japanese surrenders.<sup>22</sup> Fellers worked personally with MacArthur at the Theater Command Level, ensuring a uniquely personal relationship between the conventional military commander and the psychological warfare efforts in the Pacific.

Between 1942–1943, a separate psywar division developed to support military operations in North Africa under Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower selected Lt. Col. Robert Alexis McClure as head of this division. As chief of intelligence, McClure's work consisted of organizing public relations reports, acting in an advisory capacity of censorship, and psywar activities in Africa. McClure quickly determined the value of psywar and its opportunities to support conventional combat operations. In 1944, Eisenhower established the Psychological Warfare Division of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force. Within this department, McClure "controlled and coordinated psychological warfare in continental Europe."<sup>23</sup> Although McClure's psywar division used both American and British personnel, it conclusively proved the usefulness of psywar activities in promoting conventional combat operations.

Meanwhile, in 1942, President Roosevelt moved COI Director Col. Donovan to a separate office, the Office of Strategic Services. OSS operated under the authority of the Joint

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<sup>21</sup> Sandler, *Cease Resistance*, 155.

<sup>22</sup> Haruo Iguchi, "The First Revisionists: Bonner Fellers, Herbert Hoover, and Japan's Decision to Surrender," in *The Unpredictability of the Past: Memories of the Asia-Pacific War in US-East Asian Relations*, ed. Marc Gallicchio (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 52–53.

<sup>23</sup> Paddock, 12.

Chiefs of Staff, a change advocated for by Donovan after Pearl Harbor.<sup>24</sup> Roosevelt then transferred the Foreign Information Services—in charge of propaganda materials production—to a separate office, the Office of War Information (OWI), and deactivated the remaining Research and Analysis department of COI. This dissolution of COI effectively separated intelligence operations from propaganda services. It also meant that propaganda services operated as a government institution, whereas OSS operations worked as a joint effort between civilian and military intelligence. The OSS directed intelligence and subversive operations and limited propaganda activities against enemy troops, whereas the OWI directed propaganda services aimed at foreign audiences, civilian or military.

Unconventional warfare in World War II struggled to gain the same official status as psychological warfare operations. Despite American military experience in combating guerrilla warfare, soldiers remained unprepared for the experience of unconventional strategies or in counter-guerrilla operations. Historian Lewis Gann noted:

The Americans had once led the world in the art of guerrilla warfare. The American War of Independence, the American Civil War, and American campaigns in the Philippines had all afforded some of the most splendid examples of successful partisan and counterinsurgency operations. By the beginning of the Second World War, however, these lessons had largely been forgotten; subsequent guerrilla operations like those against the Japanese in the Philippines had to be improvised from scratch.<sup>25</sup>

The military's attitude towards unconventional warfare significantly hindered the ability to fight as and against guerrillas during the Second World War. This attitude directly led to the

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<sup>24</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Gann, 60.

development of the OSS's irregular warfare capabilities; it required an organization outside the military's jurisdiction to produce such results in military strategy.

Although the OSS primarily operated as an intelligence office, it served as an experiment in waging unconventional warfare and structuring an irregular warfare department.<sup>26</sup> The OSS deployed Operational Groups to support, direct, and perform covert operations in France from 1943 to 1945. Operational Group missions included intelligence gathering, attack of enemy encampments and communication lines, and other behind-the-lines operations that distinguished the Operational Groups from the more conventional Ranger and Commando programs. The military did not authorize formal training for these endeavors, but this did not deter the OSS from performing such activities.

Col. Aaron Bank, one of the founders of the US Army Special Forces division, first gained special operations experience as part of the OSS. In his biography, he outlined the typical training expected of OSS officers.

Most of the tactical training—conducted at the [Congressional Country Club] and in the vicinity—was the commando type. Emphasis was on raids, ambushes, cross-country movement, compass runs, sentry elimination, and the simulated destruction of various targets: bridges, culverts, railroads...Night operations were stressed.<sup>27</sup>

Despite the work put into OSS operations training, Bank expressed disappointment that this specialized training contained little preparation for the types of clandestine missions of guerrillas. He contended that “only experienced guerrilla fighters could fill this gap and, unfortunately, there weren't any available at that time.” The OSS emphasized the need for covert

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<sup>26</sup> *War Report of the OSS*, Strategic Services Unit, Office of the Assistant Secretary of War, Washington, DC (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 1976), 255.

<sup>27</sup> Bank, 5.

intelligence missions and stressed the dangers inherent in behind-the-lines operations as key components for Operational Groups, yet many infantrymen like Bank felt wholly unprepared for the reality.

The OSS participated in several activities matching the description of unconventional warfare. Under the sections of intelligence and special operations, Donovan included sections on secret espionage and counterespionage, sabotage, and guerrilla and psychological warfare, alongside other branches on “creating and disseminating “black,” or covert, propaganda.”<sup>28</sup> The connection between psywar and unconventional warfare activities in the OSS shows the early interpretations of the makeup of Special Warfare in the military. The OSS performed numerous duties during World War II. Among those, historian Harry Howe Ransom stated that the OSS acted as the operational force behind “espionage, counterintelligence in foreign nations, sabotage, guerrilla and partisan-group activity...[and] assumed operational responsibility in a field previously ignored and scorned by many diplomats and military professionals.”<sup>29</sup> The primary difference between the OSS and the special operations units deployed during the Cold War lies in the makeup of its personnel: the OSS did not operate as a military intelligence branch. Its offices employed military services and personnel, but no British or American military department oversaw operations. However, it is noteworthy that of the military personnel who participated in OSS operations, the US Army supplied the most men.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Paddock, 25.

<sup>29</sup> Harry Rowe Ransom, *Central Intelligence and National Security* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 64–65.

<sup>30</sup> Paddock, 26.

Despite the OSS operations taking place mainly in the European Theater, guerrilla warfare in Burma and across the Pacific Theater was the most extensive of the war. The OSS Detachment 101 supported and participated in guerrilla activities against the Japanese across Southeast Asia and “enjoyed cordial relations with the commanders of the conventional Allied forces in the area, who particularly valued [Detachment 101’s] timely and accurate intelligence and its rescue of downed airmen from almost certain death in the fetid jungle.”<sup>31</sup> Despite the incredible experience gained by personnel operating in this field, the primary job of Detachment 101 was intelligence gathering, which would become its primary function once the OSS was phased out to form the Central Intelligence Agency.

The OSS was not the only body to employ unconventional warfare during World War II. In the Pacific Theater, MacArthur distrusted the work of the OSS due to its direct ties to Washington and the State Department. Thus, the later guerrilla activities in the Pacific occurred outside the OSS. After the US military retreated from the Philippines, numerous American troops—either left behind or escaped POWs—began recruiting indigenous tribes and organizing impromptu and unsanctioned guerrilla units across Southeast Asia. Like the OSS units in Burma, American personnel in the Philippines had no formal unconventional warfare training or a uniform organizational structure. Many of the notable commanders of these hastily formed guerrilla operations in the Pacific, like Lt. Col. Russell Volckmann, Col. Wendell Fertig, Col. John H. McGee, and Maj. Jay D. Vanderpool became the leading proponents of unconventional warfare use in the Korean War.

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<sup>31</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 24.

World War II produced an enormous expansion in psychological warfare developments under the command of Robert McClure and covert operations developments under Donovan and the OSS. By the end of the war, McClure became the first to conduct psychological warfare campaigns in Western Europe successfully.<sup>32</sup> Although McClure's psywar division used both American and British personnel, it conclusively proved the usefulness of psywar activities in support of conventional combat operations. However, despite the impressive accomplishments of McClure's coordination of psywar activities, many US military officers and commanders remained opposed to using psychological operations in warfare.

Donovan attempted to create a guerrilla training program and command center within the military during his forays as head of COI and OSS. However, military commanders remained set in their distrust of guerrilla activities. Maj. Gen. George Strong, Army G-2, felt that "guerrilla warfare, if conducted at all, was a function of regular Army task forces whose operations would "take the form of raids and are practically identical to commando operations."<sup>33</sup> In World War II, many commanders of US Forces believed guerrilla warfare consisted primarily of subversive techniques and raiding operations. This fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and value of unconventional, guerrilla warfare persisted long after these units began deploying in 1951.

Despite the potential for psychological and unconventional warfare capabilities within the US Army and the whole military establishment, the end of World War II brought with it the end of these developments. Military debates over the continuation of the various intelligence agencies intensified throughout 1945–1946. Many military commanders remained unsure—and in some cases, downright hostile—of including unconventional methods into standard American

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<sup>32</sup> Paddock, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Major General George V. Strong, quoted in Paddock, 27.

military procedure. Despite its successes in the field and employing numerous military personnel, the OSS remained an independent agency, making it an easy target for antagonism during and after the conflict. This independence from military oversight or coordination especially troubled supporters of traditionalist military services. For these reasons, some Army commanders, including Generals Joseph Stilwell and MacArthur, refused the OSS access into areas of the Pacific Theater during the war.

By the end of World War II, American military thinking and strategic framework were anchored in two overarching beliefs; first, the belief that few militaries in the world compared to the American military in terms of manpower, technology, and strategic planning. America's role in World War II served as an exhibition of US military dominance. The foreign policy of this era relied primarily on diplomatic relations but always with the threat of American military intervention on a global scale.<sup>34</sup> The second belief of postwar military theorists was that the future of warfare rested primarily on the tactical advantages of naval and airpower working in tandem with ground forces.<sup>35</sup> Inter-branch rivalries persisted and, in some cases, worsened during the World Wars. Yet, nowhere in these beliefs did American theorists consider unconventional warfare an avenue for success. It is noteworthy to consider the debate as contemporary audiences did. Franklin Mark Osanka notes that throughout its history,

American experience with guerrilla warfare has been limited by the strength of American arms. The United States has been able to mobilize overwhelming economic and military power and bring it to bear directly on the enemy, attacking

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<sup>34</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, "Presidents, Politics, and International Intervention," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 386 (1969): 12.

<sup>35</sup> Russell Frank Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of the United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana State University, 1977), 358.



not where he was weakest but where he was strongest, because we are stronger still. American [military] doctrine has reflected this experience.<sup>36</sup>

Military theorists believed that a conventional military won wars by attacking its strongest enemy, and engaging in unconventional military activities went against the military's structured, traditional purpose.

Donovan urged the president to continue developing a centralized intelligence organization in the US and to retain the information and specialties of the experienced unconventional warfare officers. Unfortunately, President Roosevelt died before confirming the continuation of Donovan's work at the OSS. In October 1945, President Truman disbanded Donovan's organization. Historians offer many reasons for Truman's decision. Ransom suggested that part of the reason came from "Truman's own apparent prejudice against cloak and dagger operations by the United States. To continue an international spying organization in peacetime seemed somehow un-American in the atmosphere of the immediate postwar period."<sup>37</sup> Because the OSS operated covertly, its methods remained secretive, even to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and military commanders. A post-war evaluation of Donovan's office remarked that the distrust of the military towards the OSS naturally derived from the secrecy necessary for its operations.

Secrecy inevitably creates a psychological attitude of distrust and suspicion on the part of others...The effectiveness of the agency depends directly upon the confidence placed in it. But the fact that it cannot reveal its day-to-day activities precludes the possibility of a broad base of official or popular support.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Frank Mark Osanka, ed., *Modern Guerrilla Warfare: Fighting Communist Guerrilla Movements, 1941–1961* (New York: Glencoe, 1962), xxii.

<sup>37</sup> Ransom, 72.

<sup>38</sup> *War Report of the OSS*, 255.

Altogether, the secrecy of the agency's activities, the joint operations of civilian and military personnel, and the lack of a clear authority structure over the OSS made the agency highly suspicious compared to the military's rigid, traditionalist structure.

Alfred Paddock provided a different reason for Truman's disbanding of the OSS. He suggested that "unconventional warfare operations of the Office of Strategic Services actually constituted a small portion of the overall US war effort, and many OSS resistance activities were haphazard, poorly organized, and uncoordinated with overall operations."<sup>39</sup> Although they laid the foundation for later Special Warfare development, it is important not to overstate the military success of unconventional activities in World War II. The OSS remained a civilian organization despite its ventures into combat operations. The military's experiences in guerrilla warfare in the Pacific represented a disorganized amalgamation of operations neither sanctioned nor directed by any military intelligence agency.

The dissolution of the OSS brought an end to World War II unconventional warfare developments. The Army transferred many officers with experience in guerrilla warfare to different, unrelated departments. However, it did keep some experienced officers in the psywar division. This retention of psywar staff shows that psychological operations gained a level of respectability during World War II that guerrilla warfare did not. This preference for psywar activities might stem from the fact that its personnel worked directly for the military. In contrast, the officers who performed guerrilla operations primarily worked for the OSS or performed unsanctioned operations in the Pacific. Thus, unconventional warfare capabilities stagnated at the close of World War II.

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<sup>39</sup> Paddock, 32.

Psychological and unconventional warfare existed long before the creation of the traditional military of the twentieth century. Many military theorists before the 1900s viewed unconventional methods with distrust and held reservations about the use of psychological warfare. War in the twentieth century, especially World War II, altered many theorists' perceptions of modern warfare. Historians Joel Nadel and J. R. Wright suggested that this is partly due to the rampant build-up of nuclear weaponry, which "led to the concept of MAD—mutually assured destruction."<sup>40</sup> The atomic age and the growth in military technologies across the globe led many military commanders to consider alternate methods in the advent of total war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the war severely impacted the relationship between society and warfare. Gone were the days of traditional military values and the strict line between soldier and civilian. French revolutionaries, Burmese and Filipino guerrillas, and the OSS blurred the line between combatant and noncombatant. World War II changed warfare forever, and this new landscape required new strategies.

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<sup>40</sup> Nadel and Wright, 28.

## Chapter 2: The Cold War Intelligence Crisis

The disbandment of the OSS and most other military intelligence agencies did not stop the development in psychological and irregular warfare capabilities, though it did discourage them. The American government became increasingly worried about its own foreign policy agenda and national security in the postwar era. This forced a political divide in Congress that translated into military debates on the future of US warfare capabilities. This era's political and military leadership saw containment of Communist ideologies and protection of national security as America's top priorities.<sup>1</sup> The rise of the strict anti-Communist attitudes in the West produced a determination in the military to reevaluate its activities towards containment. The origins of the Army's Psywar Division emerged from the political attitudes of this era.

After World War II and the disbandment of the OSS, President Truman created the Central Intelligence Group, responsible for gathering and coordinating intelligence operations and eliminating the "friction" occurring between military branches over the jurisdiction of branch intelligence activities. The majority of the OSS's staff, resources, and expertise moved to this organization by mid-1946, leaving the military without a functional alternative to this civilian agency. The National Security Act of 1947 renamed the Central Intelligence Group the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and made it an independent civilian department. Alongside its dealings with the National Security Council, the CIA also took on "clandestine and overt collection of information, production of national current intelligence, and interagency

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<sup>1</sup> Athan Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 8.

coordination for national estimates.”<sup>2</sup> The CIA’s assumption of psychological and covert activities eased the frustration of many military leaders who believed that unconventional warfare went against the established beliefs of the conventional military, its purpose, and the necessity for its use.

US Army leadership perceived irregular warfare with extreme caution due to the political and social ramifications of pursuing covert action. Furthermore, the end of the war saw a significant decrease in military size and budget brought about by the Truman administration, in line with the post-World War II government's more political and diplomatic stance. The Army, as well as the rest of the US military, forwent further unconventional warfare development in lieu of relegating all such matters to the CIA. Between 1947–1948, the CIA began developing and establishing its own intelligence network, representing a “perceptible shifting of responsibility for covert activities to the CIA.”<sup>3</sup> National Security Council directive 10/2 of June 1948 provided the CIA with the responsibility of developing and deploying covert operations. The Security Council directed the creation of the Office of Special Projects within the CIA “to plan and conduct covert operations; and in conjunction with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to plan and prepare for the conduct of such operations in wartime.”<sup>4</sup> The JCS also formed a subcommittee to examine the development of American unconventional warfare capabilities. This subcommittee looked at both guerrilla and psychological warfare as methods of intelligence gathering and maintaining national security.

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<sup>2</sup> Paddock, 39.

<sup>3</sup> Paddock, 68.

<sup>4</sup> National Security Council Directive on Office of Special Projects, NSC 10/2 (18 June 1948), *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945–1950, Emergence of the Intelligence Establishment*, eds. C. Thomas Thorne Jr. et al. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), Document 292, section 3a.

A relatively cooperative relationship emerged between the Department of the Army, Department of State, and CIA. The Army provided studies on guerrilla warfare to the CIA for training purposes and, within Special Projects, selected members of the military and personnel with prior OSS experience to advise the CIA on training strategies for covert, behind-the-lines operations. Paddock stated that this relationship contained a “degree of harmony [that] would later disappear in jurisdictional squabbles.”<sup>5</sup> As Cold War tensions increased, the CIA’s psywar and covert operations development became an area of interest among the upper echelons of the JCS. In late 1949, they established the Joint Subsidiary Plans Division to coordinate peacetime development of covert strategies between the US military and CIA.

The military’s relinquishing of all special operations activities to the CIA limited the postwar psywar capabilities of the US Army. By 1949, former OSS members made up approximately one-third of the CIA’s staff. The Army further suffered from the post-war demobilization of troops. Unconventional units such as the psywar division all but disappeared. The Army renamed McClure’s Psychological Warfare Division the Information Control Division, further cementing the limitations on military special operations. While the Control Division did valuable civil affairs work during the American occupation of Germany, the maintenance of a respectable psywar division in the military required pressure from top military commanders on the government. Such attempts occurred early in 1946 when Army G-2 (intelligence division) “began work on a recommendation that War Department responsibility for psychological warfare be moved from G-2 to a special staff division created for this activity.”<sup>6</sup> McClure concurred with this sentiment, as he felt that G-3 (operations) better represented the

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<sup>5</sup> Paddock, 73.

<sup>6</sup> Paddock, 43.

mission of psywar activities—psywar required implementing intelligence rather than simply gathering it.

The United Nations Far East Command activated the Psychological Warfare Branch in 1947. This department operated just beneath MacArthur's office as Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers and took direction from MacArthur's Assistant Chief of Staff G-2, Maj. Gen. Charles A. Willoughby.<sup>7</sup> Though small, the branch continued developing its operational materials and, when war came to the Korean Peninsula, immediately jumped into action. The department's name indicated a joint military organization, and although it technically operated at the Theater Level, Army Col. J. Woodall Greene's appointment to command the branch suggests it was more Army-dominated.<sup>8</sup> Despite forming to pursue psychological warfare operations, the branch soon began acting primarily as an intelligence agency for the UN, and a separate division, the Research and Development Section, provided operational activities.<sup>9</sup> By 1950, the Army maintained no intelligence, psywar, or unconventional warfare capabilities of its own, and FEC frequently failed to coordinate or pass on intelligence to them.

The lack of a functional military intelligence department caused numerous problems in Southeast Asia. The CIA claimed ownership of the collection of intelligence everywhere, including the Far East.<sup>10</sup> The military strongly disagreed with allowing a civilian agency to have

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<sup>7</sup> "Psychological Warfare in Korea: An Interim Report," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1951): 65. Information for this article taken from FEC materials released to the public after the first few months of the war.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen E. Pease, *Psywar: Psychological Warfare in Korea, 1950–1953* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1992), 15

<sup>9</sup> John Ponturo and Wilmoore Kendall, *FEC Psychological Warfare Operations: Intelligence*, Technical Memorandum ORO-T-28, Far East Command, Project POWOW (Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, 1952), 1–2.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew M. Aid, "US HUMINT and COMINT in the Korean War: From the Approach of War to the Chinese Intervention, Part I, China and the Chinese Perimeter," *Intelligence and National Security* 14, no. 4 (1999): 21.

such a monopoly on vital information. It also questioned most of its intelligence from the CIA, the UN, or the Republic of Korea (ROK) military. The loyalties of individual collections agencies hindered the productivity of intelligence operations. Often, the CIA refused to hand over information to the military, and vice versa.

At that time, no centralized organization existed to deal with information gathered by clandestine missions, nor was there any doctrine that allowed for coordination of activities to deal with the information they supplied.<sup>11</sup> By late 1950, so many intelligence operations were being performed by various organizations inside and out of the military hierarchy, the Eighth Army G-2 staff quickly became overburdened. Further problems emerged over the appropriate interpretation of intelligence. “The information gathered by intelligence activities may be accurate, but if its interpretation is wrong, misguided, or simply ignored altogether, then the impact of propaganda strategies...will be minimised [sic].”<sup>12</sup> In Korea, the UN and American military had little understanding of the proper cultural and sociopolitical context to accurately interpret the intelligence gathered there. The US and the scattered intelligence offices knew very little about the land where it would fight its next war.

The context for the Korean War began with Japan’s occupation of the peninsula. Ed Evanhoe, a former member of US intelligence operations in the Far East, described the Korean Peninsula as “a natural invasion route for anyone...bent on conquering Japan.”<sup>13</sup> It also served as a land bridge for Japan to enter China. The Japanese occupied the peninsula in 1904 and

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<sup>11</sup> Peter G. Knight, “MacArthur’s Eyes”: Reassessing Military Intelligence Operations in the Forgotten War, June 1950–April 1951,” (Ph.D. Diss., Ohio State University, 2006), 348.

<sup>12</sup> Richard J. Aldrich, et al., eds., introduction to *The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945–65: Western Intelligence, Propaganda, and Special Operations* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 12.

<sup>13</sup> Ed Evanhoe, *Darkmoon: Eighth Army Special Operations in the Korean War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 1.



remained there until its surrender in September 1945. The country's occupation then moved to the Soviet Union and America under the terms of the Potsdam Declaration.<sup>14</sup> The goals of this seizure included the swift demilitarization of Japanese troops located on the peninsula and the repatriation of Korean civilians. Due to the nature of the five-year occupation there and the expected withdrawal of troops in 1949, the CIA and other intelligence agencies thought it unnecessary to continue monitoring Korea for intelligence. Most of the CIA's intelligence-gathering activities instead occurred in the Soviet Union and China.<sup>15</sup>

The US-Korean Military Advisory Group (KMAAG) provided the limited information American intelligence gained in this interwar period. This agency formed to develop national security in South Korea. KMAAG advised and assisted the South Korean government in the “organization, administration, and training of Korean military forces” as American troops withdrew between 1948–1949.<sup>16</sup> The UN and US military tasked KMAAG with determining the most effective uses of military aid in Korea as tensions between North and South. By the end of the 1940s, the US military employed approximately 500 members within this group. The responsibility of KMAAG in developing the ROK Army inevitably led to the US response to the North Korean invasion in 1950. The US understood South Korea's fragile military status and acted to preserve the republic before it fell to the Communist North.

The US invested heavily in the Korean military and did not want to see it fail during its first major test. KMAAG maintained communication with the US during the initial hostilities

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<sup>14</sup> Proclamation by the Heads of Governments, United States, China and the United Kingdom, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, the Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945*, Volume II, ed. Richardson Dougall (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), No. 1382.

<sup>15</sup> Aid, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Blumenson, et al., *Special Problems in the Korean Conflict and Their Solutions*, Headquarters of the US Eighth Army Korea, Office of the Chief of Military History (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Army War College, 1952), 1.

between North and South Korea in early 1950 and dictated the needs of the Korean military. It quickly became clear that the US failed to establish a solid foundation of regulations and doctrine within the ROK Army to withstand the sudden assault in June 1950. Korean military commanders, officers, and other personnel showed a general lack of training, coordination, and responsibility in the wake of the invasion. As one historian noted, “The problem of KMAG, simply stated, was that of keeping the Korean Army in the conflict.”<sup>17</sup> KMAG, responsible for getting intelligence, information, and resources to the US military, found itself directing operations on the ground after the North Korean People’s Army (NKPA) invasion.

The Military Advisory Group represented a poor substitute for an active and engaged intelligence agency. It did not officially serve as an Eighth Army intelligence division, nor did it produce enough information to ever be considered such. Once the ROK Army became somewhat stabilized in late 1950, KMAG resumed its original objectives in an advisory capacity. This once more limited the scope of US Army intelligence in Korea. The little information gathered from KMAG sources prior to the war no longer applied to the ever-changing nature of the conflict. Likewise, KMAG’s objectives did not allow much time to continually update US Army personnel on strategic and logistic intelligence.

The relationship between the CIA and the military continued to break down during the early months of the war. Lack of coordination between the CIA and the military’s activities created constant friction. Military commanders did not want civilian agents running around in their strategic areas; the CIA, as a civilian branch and with approval from the JCS, was under no pressure to consult with the military on its operations. The intelligence crisis included the flow of

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<sup>17</sup> Blumenson, et al., 9.

information between the UN, the American and Korean armies, and the CIA, as well as the flow of information between US military branches. The formation of a joint intelligence committee in November 1950 sought to rectify the intelligence crisis. This joint venture became known as the Far East Command Intelligence Liaison Committee, “comprised of high ranking representatives from each of the armed services along with a “reluctant” CIA representative who reported directly to Major General Willoughby.”<sup>18</sup> The CIA’s representative within this committee was the Joint Activities Command in Korea, which served as a go-between for the military and the CIA. Later in the war, the Liaison Committee merged with the Special Activities Group (discussed in chapter four) to form CCRAK—Combined Reconnaissance Activities in Korea.

Problems of command arose quickly within the Liaison Committee. The commander of the Committee took his orders directly from the Commander in Chief of the Far East, Gen. MacArthur. However, the deputy chief of the CIA’s Joint Activities Command received his orders from the Director of the CIA. The Committee operated only as an authority over the military, whereas it could only offer suggestions to the Joint Activities liaison. As a civilian agency, the CIA worked outside the jurisdiction of the US or UN military command at FEC. With no authority to stop it, the CIA practiced all manner of intelligence and unconventional warfare operations before and during the Korean War. Tensions between the CIA, the United Nations, and the United States military grew as “the variety of unconventional warfare activities engaged in by both the CIA and the services resulted in some overlapping interests.”<sup>19</sup> The CIA’s recruitment of military personnel into its ranks further distanced its working relationship with the military.

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<sup>18</sup> Knight, 341.

<sup>19</sup> Paddock, 106.

The growth in the CIA's capabilities troubled Army commanders, especially Gen. McClure. He argued that the lack of control over CIA efforts in Korea resulted in "unnecessary duplication of personnel and activities; and in multiple channels that complicated the coordination and integration of operations."<sup>20</sup> The CIA's failure to coordinate with military commanders in the peninsula and unwillingness to share information created dangerous—and sometimes deadly—consequences for combat operations. He urged the military to progress with the psychological and unconventional warfare development within its branches. The first step included establishing the US Army's Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare.

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<sup>20</sup> Paddock, 109.

### Chapter 3: Eighth Army Psychological Warfare in Korea, 1950–1953

Within the first twenty-four hours of the Korean War, Far East Command's Psychological Warfare Branch dropped an estimated twelve million leaflets over the peninsula. These leaflets "urged South Korean troops and civilians to stand firm, and pledged that the Free World forces would soon come to their aid and throw back the aggressor." The UN also broadcasted radio productions from FEC headquarters in Tokyo on numerous stations in Korea. In a 1951 report in the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, the military asserted that they only used factual statements in their early propaganda efforts, and "the truth thus became the first weapon employed by the United Nations north of the 38th Parallel and behind the lines of the North Korean army."<sup>1</sup> Psychological warfare played a crucial role in the Korean conflict from the moment President Truman declared war.

Upon the UN's entrance into the Korean War, the military's psywar capabilities were confined to the Special Projects Branch of FEC G-2 (intelligence). They consisted mainly of the aforementioned radio broadcasts and leaflet drops. Special Projects operated as a staff organization with no real authority over combat operations planning. Far East Command later moved psywar operations under G-3 (operations), but it remained a staff section with only a theoretical planning function. Moving the psywar and special operations under G-3 did nothing to clarify the objectives and requirements of such activities. G-3 provided "staff supervision of all psychological warfare and special operations activities."<sup>2</sup> It did not dictate the intelligence that supplied information for propaganda, and it had no authority to command psywar personnel.

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<sup>1</sup> "Psychological Warfare in Korea: An Interim Report," 65.

<sup>2</sup> Paddock, 90.

The United Nations Command's Psychological Warfare Division originated from the Military Intelligence Service Division on the advent of war in Korea on 25 June 1950. By the end of October, the division encompassed ten officers and fifteen civilian personnel; this number increased to fifteen officers, six noncommissioned officers, and thirty-four civilians by mid-January 1951. These figures did not include temporary or short-term personnel loaned to the psywar program from other military and civilian agencies.<sup>3</sup> FEC made many changes to its structure and objectives within the first six months of the conflict in response to the challenges of psywar operations in the field.

The Army's forays into psychological warfare evolved slower than within FEC. After lengthy discussions about implementing psychological warfare techniques into military training programs, the Army approved an experimental Tactical Information Detachment for coordinating so-called "white" propaganda. Initial training courses appeared at Fort Riley, KS, in 1947, though the Army General School only offered psychological warfare instruction to specialists within the Military Intelligence Reserves. Slowly, discussions among Army G-3 and other military command staffs moved towards establishing a psychological warfare branch for combat operation purposes. Debates over the program's command structure were still ongoing by the start of the Korean War. By mid-1950, the Army had no formal, organized psywar division or even a moderately sound plan for implementing psychological operations.

The advent of war in Asia provided the necessary stage for psychological warfare development in the US Army. Within the first few months of the Korean conflict, the Army

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<sup>3</sup> Personnel in the office were described as somewhat "fluid." Different activities might require staff members to join operational groups on the ground or direct activities from a separate technical division. Likewise, when radio stations and loudspeakers were lost or destroyed, the office staff usually increased as groundwork was temporarily halted. Pettee, 14.

realized that psychological warfare operations required a more concentrated military effort than FEC provided through its general staff. In August 1950, Secretary of the Army Frank Pace Jr. began questioning Army commanders about their progress regarding a psychological warfare branch.<sup>4</sup> Pace's dissatisfaction with the Army's limited intelligence and propaganda operations pushed it to seriously pursue psywar in Korea. In September 1950, the Department of the Army approved the creation of a new division and appointed the outspoken Gen. Robert McClure chief of this new division, known as the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare (OCPW). The office became operational on 15 January 1951. The office's creation caused tension between Gen. McClure and the commanders of staff offices at FEC G-2 and G-3.

These tensions were a result of many factors, including the personality conflicts that often arise when strong-willed men disagree over issues...Perhaps the major factor, however, was the belief of many staff officers that the relatively new fields of psychological and unconventional warfare were incidental activities that demanded an unjustified share of attention and resources in terms of their real value to the Army.<sup>5</sup>

The military's attitude towards psychological warfare continued to reject the necessity for special operations activities. The Army's difficulties in producing effective psychological warfare materials in early 1951 furthered this attitude within conventional circles.

Despite Eighth Army's early obstacles in establishing itself as a fully functional department, its activities proved relatively effective. The OCPW had three departments: Psychological Operations, Requirements, and Special Operations. The inclusion of a special operations section hints at the later coordination of psychological and unconventional warfare. Although another year would pass before the two came under one training department, it is

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<sup>4</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Paddock, 107.

noteworthy that the outline for such a structure existed at the very beginning of the OCPW. Different types of psychological warfare generally fell under either FEC or the new Eighth Army Psywar Division. FEC controlled strategic psywar operations and radio broadcasting; the Army controlled loudspeaker activities (both airborne and ground) and leaflets. In the fall of 1950, the Tactical Information Detachment from Fort Riley arrived in Korea and became the 1st Loudspeaker and Leaflet (L&L) Company. It served as the Eighth Army's first tactical propaganda unit during the war.

Most psychological warfare operations in the Korean War amounted to strategic warfare, using broad-based propaganda to influence civilians and soldiers alike. Since many North Korean soldiers were considered “functionally illiterate”—having minimal reading capabilities—leaflets aimed at this group tended to include more illustration, often showing maps with directions to UN outposts at which they could surrender.<sup>6</sup> Fliers targeting South Korean civilians urged “loyalty and effort” and instructed them to remain off the roads to avoid confusion between enemy and ally along the frontlines. The use of tactical propaganda in Korea served two primary purposes. First, they warned enemy and allied troops of incoming attacks to incite fear or urge retreat. Second, they instructed civilians in areas with limited communications to either move out of an area or request help for Allied troops. An example of the latter usage occurred when the US dropped leaflets on one side of a river to procure boats for soldiers stranded on the other side.<sup>7</sup> Eighth Army's 1st L&L Company performed ground loudspeaker activities along the Army frontline. At that time, the psywar division did not possess control over radio broadcasting in the region. Instead, these activities remained solely under the purview of FEC G-3.

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<sup>6</sup> Pease, 40.

<sup>7</sup> Pettee, 23.



By the end of May 1951, Commander in Chief in the Far East, Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway, planned to “materially expand the psychological warfare effort in support of military operations” in Korea. Although the influence of psywar and propaganda efforts in Korea remains debated, Ridgway’s desire to expand these activities suggests that FEC viewed OCPW’s operations favorably.<sup>8</sup> Psywar activities grew over the next few months to include “planning, preparing, and producing [approximately] 8 million leaflets per month.”<sup>9</sup> In July 1951, with the change in UN objectives towards compromise, psywar became the primary method of unconventional warfare in Korea. Thus, by the end of 1951, Eighth Army’s psywar capabilities grew exponentially.

The Army found it difficult to evaluate its psywar operations. Its information mainly came from POW interrogations by its officers or Army G-2 staff. The Operations Research Office reported that “the essentially unreliable character of the findings of the psywar intelligence interrogation process as conducted in EUSAK cannot be overemphasized.”<sup>10</sup> The undependability of combatants and civilians interrogated by the Army stemmed from the perception that 1) they might gain favor for telling the Americans what they wanted to hear, and 2) American personnel might misinterpret their answers due to the lack of a bilingual or

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<sup>8</sup> Paddock, 97.

<sup>9</sup> Wilmoore Kendall, et al., *Eighth Army Psychological Warfare in the Korean War*, Technical Memorandum ORO-T-17 (Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, 1951), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Kendall, et al., 69. The US Army relied almost exclusively on the Operations Research Office (ORO) to conduct research into the psychological and unconventional warfare operations that took place during the Korean War. The ORO operated under contract with Johns Hopkins University and produced multiple studies on different aspects of Korean War special operations. These studies included “a three-volume basic reference work for psychological warfare, manuals for use by psywar operators in specific countries, an analysis and grouping of sample leaflets from World War II and Korea to develop classification themes, and a large amount of field operations research in Korea.” The Human Resources Research Office within the Army eventually took over the responsibilities of the ORO in the mid-1950s. Paddock, 118.

interpretive staff within the Psywar Division. Most information from the division's questionnaires and POW interrogations came from untrained intelligence staff.

When estimating the effectiveness of Korean War psychological warfare, it is essential to compare the Army's activities to the UN's since its performance set the standard for operational objectives. Sandler noted that UN personnel suffered from the same level of unreliability in POW interrogations and questionnaires.

As for the effectiveness of UNC psywar, US Army studies at the time indicated that about 30 per cent of Communist POWs claimed that they had been influenced by the [psywar leaflets]. Another survey attempted to avoid any pro-UNC bias in its conclusions by asking roughly 750 POWs more indirect questions in a "probing, conversational" framework. These prisoners claimed that the greatest obstacle to their surrender was their fear of being killed in the attempt. The promise of cigarettes and freedom from hard labor as well as safety from aerial attack were important to these captives, most of whom claimed that they believed the "happy POW" leaflets. Another group of 768 North Koreans and 238 Chinese prisoners gave roughly the same answers.<sup>11</sup>

Based on postwar evaluations of Korean War operations, the Army concluded that psychological warfare and propaganda operations positively impacted enemy and ally behaviors during the war. This conclusion appeared especially true with propaganda directed at the battle-weary Communist soldier.<sup>12</sup> ORO researcher George Pettee reported that both FEC and EUSAK psychological warfare efforts proved valuable. He based this assertion on the Chinese and North Korean's attempts to imitate American psywar propaganda. During the latter part of the war, these nations worked tirelessly to counteract the perceived influence of psywar materials on their

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<sup>11</sup> Stanley Sandler, *The Korean War: No Victors, No Vanquished* (Lexington, KT: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 202.

<sup>12</sup> Pease, 47, 77–78.

troops.<sup>13</sup> The optimistic perception of psywar operations gave proponents of psychological warfare a solid basis for future development.

There remained several areas in the Army's Psychological Warfare Division that needed improvement: staffing, lack of objectives, inaccessibility of resources, intelligence, and inter-branch coordination. Staffing the department with capable people proved difficult. In mid-1950, the Army offered no military training courses on psychological warfare outside of Fort Riley and only to select military reserve officers. These courses were taught mainly from a theoretical perspective, as most officers with psychological warfare experience transferred elsewhere within the military or found employment at the CIA following World War II. In 1950, only seven officers in the US Army possessed the necessary qualifications for psywar personnel.<sup>14</sup>

Early OCPW training courses in 1950 took place over 17 weeks at Georgetown University. By the spring of 1951, under the direction of McClure, Lt. Col. John O. Weaver organized the new Psychological Warfare Department at the Army General School in Fort Riley and worked to establish a formalized training program for OCPW personnel. This unique program cut the initial training courses in half and "provided a general introduction to psychological warfare, strategic intelligence, foreign army organization, intelligence, and psychological operations."<sup>15</sup> However, this training failed to present ways to implement culturally and socially sensitive propaganda. The ORO noted in 1951 that none of the officers in the Army Psywar Division possessed an expert awareness of the Far East generally or Korea specifically. Although most in the office did not consider this a significant handicap to psywar

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<sup>13</sup> Pettee, 51.

<sup>14</sup> Paddock, 93.

<sup>15</sup> Paddock, 117.

operations, the ORO suggested that this and the “lack of an officer linguist” to translate and communicate effectively with the Korean population hindered psywar activities.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Eighth Army psywar lacked the training and experience to implement effective operations in Korea.

The Army’s Psychological Warfare Division lacked clear objectives for its operations and department. The OCPW oversaw the organization and training of all psywar staff and aided the development of leaflet production, radio broadcasting, and loudspeaker units in the field. Yet, it never formally produced an official statement on the division’s purpose.<sup>17</sup> This is partially due to the unclear nature of the Army’s relationship with FEC psywar. Although the Psychological Warfare Division operated under Eighth Army operations staff, it relied on FEC for intelligence since, at the time, the Army had no intelligence agency of its own. Far East Command saw Eighth Army psywar operations as subordinate to its own activities. It controlled most of the materials, intelligence, and inter-branch connections in psychological warfare operations. The Army’s access to materials required approval from FEC, whose own operations often took precedence and whose personnel felt that the Eight Army Psywar Division undermined FEC’s activities. This chain of intelligence and operational approval inevitably dampened the strategic capabilities of the Eighth Army Psywar Division.

FEC also directed the way the Army used these resources. The Psychological Warfare Division operated under strict guidelines from Far East Command that continuously evolved. The UN listed several requirements for Korean War propaganda materials. All materials spoke from a UN perspective and did not refer to a civil war. They only discussed the practical problems of Communism and not the theoretical. Propaganda used simple language and focused

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<sup>16</sup> Kendall, et al., 43–44.

<sup>17</sup> Kendall, et al., 2, 10.

on subjects directly affecting Korean life. In the early months of the war, propaganda materials limited their discussion of the Soviets or the Chinese, “leaving the door as wide as possible for the greater Communist powers to back out or stay out.”<sup>18</sup> The UN and the US government desired not to provoke these powers unnecessarily. The abrupt reversal of these guidelines in late 1951 due to the change in political war objectives impeded the efficiency of Army psywar activities. By 8 December 1951, the reversed position of the UN sought to instill doubt and resentment directly and factually amongst Chinese soldiers and civilians. Pettee noted that “it is difficult to develop vigorous psywar output, in leaflets or radio or loudspeaker talks, when the logic of the war itself has not been fully specified.”<sup>19</sup> Shifting war aims during the conflict significantly impacted the production value of Eighth Army propaganda.

The Army’s inability to easily access intelligence, research, means of production, and dissemination of propaganda challenged its effectiveness in Korea for numerous reasons. First, intelligence gathered by FEC and the Eighth Army “has thus far been developed more on the side of intelligence *about* psywar than on the side of intelligence *for* psywar.”<sup>20</sup> The Army gathered intelligence primarily for the sake of storing information, not for putting it to practical use. Second, effective propaganda requires extensive intelligence on the affected individuals and organizations and must be continually updated. Tactical psywar operations, aimed at a specific unit and place, need information on the circumstances hindering or aiding its target. Strategic psywar, directed at a more general audience, still requires social, cultural, and political

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<sup>18</sup> Pettee, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Pettee, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Pettee, 6.

intelligence to target troops and civilians effectively. The small amount of intelligence given to the psywar department was often outdated when they received it.

The third problem caused by the intelligence crisis was that the majority of Eighth Army intelligence went towards supporting conventional combat actions and not psychological warfare operations. The unwillingness of Army departments to coordinate with psywar shows the conventional military's dismissal of psywar activities. Fourth, gathering intelligence in North Korea involved significant risk when put against Chinese and North Korean counterintelligence efforts. Eliot Cohen emphasized that American intelligence operations in Korea occurred at odds with the enemy's attempts to repel them.<sup>21</sup> And finally, Pettee stressed that "psywar is more effective on the winning side, and the US has been the winning side only one-fifth of the time," as of January 1951.<sup>22</sup> It is difficult to produce effective propaganda urging surrender and defection within a winning opponent.

Access to materials, resources, and intelligence hindered Eighth Army Psychological Warfare activities, and so did the limited scope of its operations. Psywar operations required coordination with other Army divisions and other military branches. It required technicians from all areas of the military to coordinate propaganda dissemination in the many combat zones active during the war. The Army especially needed the Air Force to drop leaflets and perform flyovers for loudspeaker announcements. Instead, the Psychological Warfare Division relied on Army G-2 and G-3 to recommend actions and Eighth Army command to approve them. This lack of inter-

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<sup>21</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, "'Only Half the Battle': American Intelligence and the Chinese Intervention in Korea, 1950," *National Security* 5, no. 1 (1990): 145.

<sup>22</sup> Pettee, 15.

department and branch harmonization hindered most efforts to produce an effective relationship between the Psywar Division and the combat units that disseminated their materials.

Military, social, and political interests—as well as a hesitancy to start another World War—challenged the development of both conventional and unconventional methods during the Korean War. Eighth Army Psychological Warfare required access to intelligence, freedom from the FEC and the staff headquarters of G-2 and G-3, and further support from the right people in the right places. Despite these problems, the developments in Korea noticeably affected the attitude of Eighth Army command towards special operations. The proof of this appears in the progress of the US Psychological Warfare Division at the Army War College and the doctrinal changes that occurred stateside (discussed in chapter six). However, psychological warfare represented just one side of the special operations capabilities of the US Army. To understand the profound effect of these activities on Army Special Warfare development, one must look at the other side of Korean War special operations advancement: unconventional warfare.

## Chapter 4: Early Cold War Unconventional Warfare, 1950–1951

Psychological warfare proved quite effective in the first few months of the Korean conflict. However, military commanders hesitated to implement more clandestine activities into the services. While US Naval and Air Force intelligence continued to operate more covert missions, US Eighth Army remained largely absent for the first few months of the war.<sup>1</sup> The assortment of intelligence and unconventional operations occurring in Korea—both military and civilian—created numerous problems for coordinating military actions. The Army’s involvement in irregular warfare began due to these difficulties when, in September 1950, the UN established a new organization to oversee all special operations activities in Korea.

General Order Number 7 established the Special Activities Group (SAG) under the UN’s command. SAG claimed responsibility for coordinating all special operations performed by US and British agencies.<sup>2</sup> According to Robert Black, one of the intents of this General Order included activating a unique United Nations Command unit to engage in “raiding, commando, intelligence, and other operations as might be directed by the commander-in-chief.”<sup>3</sup> SAG units received sixty days of intensive training at Camp McGill, Japan. The facilities there supported training troops in raiding and guerrilla operations. SAG hosted several “special operations” units, including US Air Force, Airborne, and Marine units, and British Commandos. The Eighth Army’s contribution to this provisional section was the Army Raiders.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard L. Kiper, *Spare Not the Brave: The Special Activities Group in Korea* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2014), 149.

<sup>2</sup> Kiper, *Spare Not the Brave*, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Black, 16.



The Army activated the 1st Raider Company in September 1950. It placed this company under a small Army staff in G-3 known only as General Headquarters (GHQ). The Army formed this company to perform a diversionary mission in support of MacArthur's push into North Korea in September 1950. The invasion plan consisted of an amphibious assault on Incheon, a large port city just south of the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. MacArthur's strategy involved landing "two divisions amphibiously in the rear of hostile lines in order to envelop and destroy the enemy."<sup>4</sup> The offensive consisted of cutting off a large portion of NKPA troops, thereby allowing UN Forces and the Eighth Army to advance further into North Korea and, eventually, retake the peninsula. In conjunction with this plan, the Army Raiders' activities would draw enemy strength away from Incheon by performing an amphibious landing at Gunsan, approximately 100 miles south of the intended target.

Historians debate this organization's overall training, unit objectives, and command structure. The secrecy of the 1st Raider Company resulted in a significant deficit in information about the group. Maj. Gen. Edward M. Almond, Chief of Staff for the United Nations Command, oversaw the organization of this division. He placed Col. Louis B. Ely in command of the 1st Raider Company. It is unknown what specific qualifications the Army required for volunteers, though members later asserted that involvement in World War II or prior covert warfare experience was not a prerequisite. The Army employed most volunteers from administrative departments, men with job titles such as "clerks and guards and managers."<sup>5</sup> Few, if any,

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<sup>4</sup> Blumenson, et al., 33.

<sup>5</sup> John W. Connor, *Let Slip the Dogs of War: A Memoir of the GHQ 1st Raider Company (8245th Army Unit) a.k.a. Special Operations Company Korea 1950–51*, 2nd edition (Bennington, VT: Merriam Press, 2012), 15.

volunteers for the Army's first foray into sanctioned special operations work had prior combat experience, conventional or unconventional.

In 1950, the term "special operations" held no significant meaning in Army doctrine. The use of "special operations" in intelligence circles like the CIA primarily referred to espionage and counterespionage activities. Official military dictionaries and field manuals did not include this term, though the phrase "Special Operations Plans" appears in the 1944 Field Manual 31-5. Kiper noted that "although special operations is not specifically defined in the manual, it is clear that this plans section refers to amphibious assault landings and special (not defined) inland operations."<sup>6</sup> The outline for these operations in 1944 included guidance on the proper organization, training, and implementation of amphibious raider units. However, this outline was not used during the creation of the 1st Army Raiders.<sup>7</sup> Although the activities described in 1944 included executing "special inland operations," the manual does not include any information on performing irregular actions, separate from those performed by conventional troops.

Most volunteers later reported that they endured severe training regiments that served as a harsh reality for men once employed as clerical staff. Evaluations of this training noted that it did not conform to the expected Army standards. The Army failed to impress upon the Raiders the necessity for unity, and "training focused on individual skills, with almost no time devoted to unit training."<sup>8</sup> The ability of covert forces to operate in sync with little verbal communication, often in complex or hostile environments, is a priority skill in clandestine activities. This lack of training would inevitably hurt the company. Furthermore, most volunteers later asserted they

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<sup>6</sup> Kiper, *Spare Not the Brave*, 71.

<sup>7</sup> Department of the Army, *Landing Operations on Hostile Shores*, Field Manual 31-5 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1944), 56–57.

<sup>8</sup> Kiper, *Spare Not the Brave*, 46.

received no official reasoning for their training. Without knowing their mission objectives for the Incheon Invasion and the limited training time available, it is possible that much-needed instruction was ignored or poorly explained due to the push to become mission-ready. Upon examination of the Raider operations, it is evident that the Raiders were prepared primarily for one mission without any additional unit objectives or organizational purpose.

The UN divided resources and training facilities at Camp McGill between FEC, the Marine Corps Mobile Training Team Able, US Navy Underwater Demolitions Teams, and Royal Navy and Marines.<sup>9</sup> Despite training in close proximity to other divisions and service branches, none of the mentioned units tried to coordinate their training for maximum efficiency while in combat. The hostility of many conventional units' commanding officers towards the new Raider Company inevitably worsened the relationship between SAG units and established Marine Raider and Royal Commando divisions. For example, it is well known that Maj. Gen. Oliver P. Smith, the 1st Marine Division Commander, continuously urged Maj. Gen. Almond to allow the 1st Marines—trained for the same duties as GHQ's 1st Raider Company—to perform the necessary diversionary tactics during the invasion and the subsequent task of seizing Kimpo Airfield, though Almond refused. Members of the Raider company like John Connor noted a sense of “interservice rivalry” between the Raiders and the Marines.<sup>10</sup> The Army Raiders performed admirably for a conventional raiding unit, but many military commanders believed their activities overstepped into those of other conventional divisions.

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<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Briscoe, “Born of Desperation: Early Special Operations in the Korean War,” *Veritas* 6, no. 1 (2010): 15.

<sup>10</sup> Connor, 105.

The Raiders provided little to the Incheon invasion. Their feint on the coast of Gunsan received little acknowledgment by military strategists or Korean War historians.<sup>11</sup> In the aftermath, MacArthur concentrated his efforts towards pushing further into North Korea. Although initially assigned to perform raiding duties along the coast, it quickly became apparent that Army Raider companies (of which the Army created three) mainly performed patrol duty. Surprisingly, team members later claimed they did not remember any training in antiguerrilla or patrol maneuvers. Kiper noted:

While conducting patrols is a standard mission for infantry units, the Raiders were not an infantry company. They had been trained primarily for ship-to-shore operations, not long-term, long-range patrols on shore. None of the Raiders recall specific training for such missions. It is difficult to accept, though, that such training was not conducted.<sup>12</sup>

The failure of SAG and Eighth Army to inform these companies of their unit objects, combined with most Raiders' combat inexperience, likely limited the value of their training. It is also possible that the Raiders missed the information due to the pre-invasion rush of training. Regardless, evidence suggests that the training offered to these men inadequately prepared them for any of the operations assigned to them.

The Raiders represented the US Army's first attempt at special operations training and unconventional warfare strategy. Many problems arose in the process of forming this unit. The jumble of divisions operating under SAG caused much confusion for Army commanders and

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<sup>11</sup> The Gunsan landing was described by the official military historian for the Korean War, Roy E. Appleman as merely a backup plan for the Incheon invasion. He offhandedly mentions that a small unit approached Gunsan but made no further reference to the Army Raiders. Prior to the 1980s, very few military historians knew about the 1<sup>st</sup> Raider Company. Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu: The United States Army in the Korean War (June–November 1950)*, 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1992), 494, 500.

<sup>12</sup> Kiper, *Spare Not the Brave*, 248.

enlisted personnel. Although the Army Raider Companies derived from the Eighth Army, most of the unit's training and deployment directives came from FEC and Gen. MacArthur. SAG failed to coordinate special operations between military branches and services effectively. By the winter of 1950, only the Army Raiders, a few British Commando units, and the Royal Navy Volunteers unit remained under SAG.<sup>13</sup> Resources were stretched thin between the many organizations involved in the Korean conflict. The Eighth Army deactivated its SAG companies in March 1951. Until the final weeks of its activities, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Raider Companies continued their patrol and intelligence missions in various regions of North Korea. Afterward, the Army transferred most of the Raiders back to their previous administrative and occupational duties in Japan. The Army moved those who did not return to their former positions into various infantry and cavalry positions within Eighth Army. Thus, the Army Raiders came to a quick and relatively quiet end.

The Raider Company was the first of two attempts of the US Army to develop its special operations capabilities in 1950. When the Army first designed its Raider program, it also planned to resurrect the Army Rangers. Ranger units trace their heritage back to Robert Rogers in the American Revolution; they reappear consistently throughout the many wars fought by US Armed Forces, their most recent being World War II. Their reactivation in Korea was no surprise when the Army needed special operations units. Made up entirely of volunteers from conventional infantry units, Rangers specialized in "combat behind the lines, performing long-range reconnaissance, ambushes, and raids."<sup>14</sup> They often positioned themselves at the head of advancing troops or along the sides of infantry divisions to handle the brunt of enemy attacks

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<sup>13</sup> Kiper, *Spare Not the Brave*, 116.

<sup>14</sup> Black, 5.

targeting the larger conventional divisions. For many, the Army Rangers represented the closest the conventional Army ever came to sanctioning covert operations before Korea.

The brutality of the first few months of combat left many Army commanders seeking ways to reduce the casualty rates of their infantries. In August 1950, *Newsweek* ran Harold Lavine's story about the endless misery suffered by troops in Korea and the lack of proper training afforded the Americans.<sup>15</sup> John Osborne published an article in *Life* magazine describing American fears concerning Communist spies dressed as civilians crossing into UN territory.<sup>16</sup> Eighth Army leadership believed "the North Koreans had obscured the rules of war. In a nation of refugees, every man, woman, and child was a potential spy, saboteur, or disguised member of a military unit."<sup>17</sup> Infantry commanders wanted specialized units attached to their companies to ensure the safety of their activities and troops. The War Department General Staff conceded and recommended that the Army organize an "experimental unit of six officers and thirty-five enlisted men" that would comprise an unconventional warfare division.<sup>18</sup>

The Army selected Col. John H. McGee to outline plans for a new organization adept at guerrilla warfare. McGee certainly excelled in this area. In 1940, Capt. McGee operated in the Philippines with the 45th Infantry Scouts, training indigenous troops on Mindanao Island. Although trained for conventional operations, McGee's experience with indigenous troops provided him with multicultural military experience and an understanding of existing social and language barriers. McGee became a POW in 1942 and escaped captivity two years later by

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<sup>15</sup> Harold Lavine, "'Hell Country': Of Mud, Muck, and Human Excrement," *Newsweek* 36, no. 6 (7 August 1950): 9.

<sup>16</sup> John Osborne, "Report from the Orient: Guns Are Not Enough," *Life* 29, no. 8 (21 August 1950): 77.

<sup>17</sup> Black, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Bank, 143.

jumping from a Japanese transport ship. Filipino natives operating as guerrillas across the islands rescued him and absorbed him into their units. Thus, McGee became a guerrilla almost overnight.<sup>19</sup>

McGee's experiences in World War II made him particularly important to unconventional warfare development in Korea. Along with most other officers with unconventional and guerrilla experiences from World War II, the Army transferred McGee to a staff office in Eighth Army G-2 after the war. In July 1950, McGee led the screening process for Army Raider volunteers, though his involvement never went beyond this initial phase. Instead, McGee, then working in Eighth Army G-3, received orders to develop a plan for specialized units to counteract enemy infiltrations across the lines via General Order 237.<sup>20</sup> While working on a solution for this plan, he received more immediate orders to develop teams to operate behind enemy lines in the Pohang Pocket (between Taegu and Pohang), believed to be the base of Communist guerrilla operations.<sup>21</sup> This latter organization was realized through the Eighth Army Rangers.

The SAG Army Raiders and Eighth Army Rangers operated in North Korea simultaneously. Both organizations employed escape and evasion maneuvers, worked "out front" of conventional troops and occasionally behind enemy lines, and worked in smaller units than traditional infantry companies. Dissimilar to the Raiders, McGee's structure designed Army Ranger units for combat outside the realms of conventional militaries, as discussed by various

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<sup>19</sup> Eugene G. Piasecki, "John H. McGee: Soldier, Leader, Trainer," *Veritas* 8, no. 2 (2012): 28–29.

<sup>20</sup> General Order 237, Headquarters, Eighth United States Army, Korea, dated 24 August 1950, published 25 August 1950. This order activated the Eighth Army Ranger Company.

<sup>21</sup> Piasecki, "Eighth Army Rangers: First in Korea," *Veritas* 6, no. 1 (2010): 35.

military personnel and commanders. The Raiders emerged for a specific purpose: the Incheon Invasion. Their activities are difficult to evaluate since they performed few actions after the invasion and because SAG never provided official expectations for the Raiders to compare with their completed actions. This failure to identify core unit objectives makes it difficult for historians to compare the effectiveness of the Raiders with that of the Army Rangers. The Army more clearly defined the Rangers' goals as unconventional, supportive operations in coordination with the infantry regiments.

The Army's implementation of the Rangers showed their gradual acceptance of unconventional warfare, though they refrained from guerrilla or antiguerrilla activities. Col. John Van Houten, commander of the Ranger Training Center at Fort Benning, GA, refused to allow his Rangers to partake in guerrilla activities. He and many other traditional military commanders in the early 1950s disliked the idea of involving troops in operations that blurred the line between conventional military actions, spy craft, and revolutionaries. Some officers within the Eighth Army special operations sector urged more intensive training on unconventional activities for the new operatives. At the disbandment of the Raider companies, Maj. Gen. Almond suggested that Rangers be trained for antiguerrilla activities to aid future conflicts, as the prevalence of such insurgent units amongst the enemy became increasingly apparent. However, these methods remained controversial.

McGee helped establish the Eighth Army Ranger Training Center, hand-selected sixty-five volunteers, and scouted commanders for this hastily produced experiment. Under McGee's command, the Ranger Training Center—first at Camp Drake, Japan and then at Fort Benning—ran for seven weeks. Rangers learned to conduct raids, perform reconnaissance and combat patrols, serve as motorized detachments, and produce trail blocks during that time. Unlike



previous Ranger activities, the Army specified that these new units should also become proficient in airborne operations. The Army planned to attach a Ranger company to each infantry division for support and security purposes.

The military hesitated to make such an experimental program permanent. It established the Eighth Army Rangers as a Table of Distribution Unit, a unit formed on a temporary basis that disallows troops or companies to receive honors or citations for campaigns, a decision that “would cause much resentment in the years to come.”<sup>22</sup> The Rangers began training in August 1950, and between September 1950–September 1951, a total of fifteen Ranger Companies emerged. Of the six initial units produced in late 1950, the Army attached three to existing infantry divisions in Korea, two to regiments in West Germany in anticipation of a Soviet invasion, and one more company remained at the Ranger Training Center to instruct incoming Ranger companies.<sup>23</sup>

	<u>Arrived in Korea</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
*1st Ranger Co	17 Dec 50	2nd Inf Div
2nd Ranger Co	30 Dec 50	7th Inf Div
3rd Ranger Co	24 Mar 51	3rd Inf Div (3 Apr 51)
4th Ranger Co	30 Dec 50	1st Cav Div
5th Ranger Co	24 Mar 51	25th Inf Div (31 Mar 51)
8th Ranger Co	24 Mar 51	24th Inf Div (31 Mar 51)

Figure 1. Table of Distribution of Assignments of Ranger Companies in Korea. Source: Blumenson, et al., 81

<sup>22</sup> Black, 23.

<sup>23</sup> The 2nd Ranger Company was the first and only all-black Ranger unit in US History. The racial tensions of that era in American history made it doubly difficult for African Americans to gain respect for their military status and performance within an elite unit. For further study on this topic, please see Black, *Rangers in Korea*; Edward L. Posey, *US Army's First, Last, and Only All-Black Rangers: The 2nd Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne) in the Korean War, 1950–1951*, El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2009.; Victor J. Bond, “The History of the 2nd Ranger Company,” Master’s Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2003.

Throughout the war, the Rangers participated in numerous actions. Their duties often included patrolling for enemy guerrillas, providing security for the infantry, and holding a line, village, or other targets until infantry regiments could cross. Black added that “these men destroyed an enemy division headquarters, made the first combat jump in Ranger history, and participated in the first defeat of Chinese forces during the war...and the companies suffered from forty to ninety percent casualties.”<sup>24</sup> An estimated one in every nine Rangers died in Korea. This casualty rate made many Army commanders pause. The cost of the Rangers challenged the program’s longevity, not only in monetary terms but in replacement troops. Getting men with the proper experience and skills proved a difficult task when Rangers received injuries or died at a rapid rate due to the nature of their activities at the front and rear of infantry divisions.

The Ranger companies took men from conventional units where a deficit in staffing already existed. This occurred at a time when the Army considered raising its training standards, which would make recruitment more competitive. Army Chief of Staff Gen. J. Lawton Collins visited the Training Center in April 1951 to gain information on how to raise the conventional Army’s training structure. Gen. Collins’ inquest highlights the perspective of Army commanders towards the Ranger units. They viewed the Army Ranger program as merely a more rigorous type of infantry unit and did not understand the specialized training it required. Rather than change the overall recruitment standards for the Army, the military implemented new volunteer requirements for the Ranger program to dissuade men from leaving their regular service for the specialized group. The Ranger program now required volunteers with parachute qualifications, making the selection process more rigorous and thorough.

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<sup>24</sup> Black, 5–6.

The military rarely used Rangers to provide behind-the-lines, intelligence, or covert operations. An analysis of the Ranger operations from October–December 1950 shows the poor implementation of the Rangers when deployed amongst conventional infantry groups. Attached to these traditional divisions, most of the Rangers’ activities conformed to conventional military standards rather than the special operations expected of elite units. Ranger units were “organized and equipped for rapid movement and brief and decisive engagements, for aggressive action, day or night, [and] were not intended to be employed in sustained combat.”<sup>25</sup> The infantry divisions hardly used the unique capabilities of Rangers, designed for more irregular maneuvers, or at least activities of a clandestine or covert nature. The Army rarely employed Rangers in airborne, amphibious, or infiltration operations. The under-utilization of Rangers in Korea exemplifies the general misunderstanding of the value of covert operations by conventional military commanders. The training provided to the Rangers did not matter when not employed during combat.

Improper implementation led to another problem for the Army Rangers. Since the Army did not train Rangers to operate as conventional units, their organizational systems did not necessarily translate to conventional duties. Unlike traditional units, the Army did not supply Ranger companies with seemingly unlimited equipment and personnel. Members of the Eighth Army Historical Service Detachment noted that Ranger companies often seemed “a burden to the organization to which they were attached.”<sup>26</sup> Commanders at the Ranger Training Center produced a report in late December 1950 discouraging Eighth Army Command from attaching Ranger companies to infantry divisions. However, since the original organization and

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<sup>25</sup> Blumenson, et al., 81–82.

<sup>26</sup> Blumenson, et al., 85.

instructions of the Ranger companies specifically stated that one Ranger company be supplied to each infantry section, there was little G-3 could do.

In late 1950, President Truman relieved Gen. MacArthur as Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Far East. Gen. Matthew Ridgway took over in December 1950. Ridgway's ascension to that office significantly helped the cause of special operations development. Ridgway's World War II experiences with the 82nd Airborne provided him with an understanding of the capabilities of small unit actions.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, Ridgway formerly acted as Commander of the Eighth Army, meaning he already possessed knowledge of ongoing special warfare development within the Army.

The Army eventually determined that the cost of the Ranger program far outweighed the perceived benefits. It officially inactivated the Army Ranger Company (8213th Army Unit) on 28 March 1951. The Army dispersed inactive companies and Rangers into miscellaneous infantry units, except those with parachute training who went to the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team.<sup>28</sup> Companies deployed overseas continued their activities, but the Army did not organize any new companies after this point. Then, in August 1951, the formal deactivation order came via General Order Number 584. The Army dismantled all Ranger companies, save for the few stationed in Germany, Japan, or stateside, and continued the Ranger Training Center only under the unofficial designation of replacement.<sup>29</sup> The training center, renamed the Ranger Department of the Infantry School, was responsible for "continued study and training of Ranger

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<sup>27</sup> John C. Watts, *Korean Nights: The 4th Ranger Infantry Company (Airborne), 1950–1951* (St. Petersburg, FL: Southern Heritage Press, 1997), 91.

<sup>28</sup> Black, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Replacement units operate as reserve forces with a small number of potential replacement troops for combat field activities.

doctrine, tactics, techniques, and organization. Ranger courses became available primarily for infantry officers and NCOs assigned to infantry units.”<sup>30</sup> The new Ranger Department included returning members of the Ranger units in Korea who took over instruction at this school. While this served as another failure in Eighth Army unconventional warfare development, the continuance of the Ranger companies within the Army indicates the necessity to retain experienced personnel as instructors for future conflicts.

Black argues that the true reason for the deactivation of the Ranger program in Korea stemmed from the attitudes of the Army’s upper command.

It was not the Marines that were the foe of the Rangers but, rather, the old guard of the Army. This was personified in the remarks by Maj. Gen. Reuben E. Jenkins, Assistant Chief of Staff G-3 Department of the Army. General Jenkins was opposed to the formation of what he termed “prima donna” type units. He stated that the formation of such units lowered the standard of regular infantry units by draining them of their best soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

Whether or not this is true, it is undeniable that the Army deeply misunderstood and distrusted unconventional warfare. Commanders recognized the talent of the Rangers without understanding how to use it, and the inexperience of both officers and the enlisted made everyone uneasy.<sup>32</sup>

The final, most significant problem with the Army Ranger experiment stemmed from the inability of Rangers to perform duties expected of unconventional units and the later Special Operations Forces. The Eighth Army Rangers worked in reconnaissance, primarily consisting of “long patrolling at the spearhead of the advancing Eighth Army.”<sup>33</sup> Rangers did not operate deep

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<sup>30</sup> Black, 204.

<sup>31</sup> Black, 196.

<sup>32</sup> Blumenson, et al., 84.

<sup>33</sup> Knight, 354.

into enemy territory, did not generally engage with indigenous guerrillas or irregulars, and did not plan, coordinate, or support joint US-indigenous operations. Therefore, the Eighth Army Ranger Companies used conventional methods in their intelligence gathering, steering clear of covert operations like those of later Eighth Army partisans. The few Ranger companies used for covert operations were generally unable to gain helpful information because of their pale complexion, the language and cultural barrier, and the lack of adequate training for such missions. Col. Aaron Bank, a former OSS member, later advocated for a distinction between the Army Ranger program and the developing Special Forces units. The Army Field Force noted that they felt “Special Forces should focus on the utilization of indigenous guerrilla groups rather than US-staffed Ranger units and that Special Forces should be regarded and kept as a separate, distinct unit.”<sup>34</sup> By 1951, the Army Field Forces and numerous other Army commanders made clear that the duties of the Army Rangers differed from the unconventional warfare units developed elsewhere.

There remained several areas of concern for the US Army’s Special Warfare development. The military needed to address the racial and language barriers between American and indigenous Koreans. It needed to prioritize intelligence operations outside of staff organizations. The casualty rate of elite forces required a solution that did not involve pulling from American personnel in other units and military branches. Finally, any potential Special Operations Forces must operate as guerrillas and embrace the nature of unconventional warfare strategy. Black provided his commentary on a crucial aspect of irregular warfare missing from Ranger operations:

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<sup>34</sup> Bank, 155.

The uncoordinated efforts by the Eighth Army in Korea, the United Nations Command in Japan, and the Department of the Army in Washington, were a knee-jerk response to the [North] Korean success at operations behind U.N. lines. There was not a US Army plan or doctrine at the beginning of the Korean War for a school or even a unit at cadre strength that would specialize in a form of warfare Americans had excelled at since the seventeenth century—the raid.<sup>35</sup>

The deactivation of the Army Rangers forced the Eighth Army to reevaluate its operational performances. Rangers could not perform the raiding and intelligence operations required by the Eighth Army. The most apparent reason for the failure of behind-the-lines operations stemmed from the racial and sociological differences between UN troops and North Koreans and the military's unwillingness to commit to irregular operations. Therefore, the Army needed to recruit from within the racial and sociological sphere of the enemy, and it finally needed to employ the unconventional tactics expected of Special Operations Forces.

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<sup>35</sup> Black, 17.

## Chapter 5: Eighth Army Partisan Warfare, 1951–1954

The foundations for the United Nations Partisan Infantry emerged during the Army's early Cold War unconventional operations. Col. McGee's experience in guerrilla warfare in the Philippines and involvement in the Army Raiders' and Rangers' organization made him a prime candidate to form an irregular warfare unit under the Army's command. Col. Ben Malcom wrote: "Korea was a vacuum for special operations and unconventional warfare. Few people wanted to do it. Fewer still knew how to do it. Colonel John McGee was one of the few who could make it work."<sup>1</sup> In 1950, the Army shelved McGee's initial construction of an irregular warfare unit and focused instead on building the Army Ranger program. However, McGee's plans resurfaced in early 1951 when an unforeseen opportunity arose in the North Korean hillsides.

The Army first encountered North Korean Anti-Communist guerrillas around November 1950. These guerrillas came from many regions in North Korea, though most of the earliest partisans came from the Hwanghae Province in the south. This region contained fertile soil that produced rice, wheat, vegetables, and fruits, giving it the nickname the "breadbasket of North Korea," and a 1941 census listed the province's population at approximately 1.8 million.<sup>2</sup> The capital of this province, Haeju, lies eighty miles northwest of Seoul, the capital of South Korea. The short distance between this city and the South Korean capital produced a close connection between the Koreans on both sides of the 38th Parallel. In 1947, the North Korean Draft Act called for "all able-bodied men from seventeen to twenty-five" to submit themselves for service

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<sup>1</sup> Ben S. Malcom, *White Tigers: My Secret War in Korea* (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 1996), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Daley, *UN Partisan Forces in the Korean Conflict 1951–1952: A Study of Their Characteristics and Operations*. 8086<sup>th</sup> Army Unit, Military History Detachment Three, AFFE (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Military History Institute, 1954), 1.



in the Communist military. Many anti-Communists fled to the hillsides to escape the draft and protect their families. They then formed underground resistance parties. These guerrillas quickly gained sympathizers among the villages, raided NKPA encampments, stole Soviet and Chinese weapons, arranged for the spreading of propaganda, and actively recruited from the nearby villages.

These North Korean guerrillas welcomed the UN invasion in September 1950. Some of these guerrillas established themselves as security for UN troops and established communication lines for the Allies. The UN estimated that these irregulars numbered in the tens of thousands by this time. Then, in mid-October, the Chinese Communist Forces (CCF) crossed the Yalu River at the border of China and North Korea and halted the UN's advance. As the UN military hastily retreated toward the 38th Parallel, they attempted to help the hundreds of thousands of North Koreans trying to escape the mainland in what is known as the "Korean Dunkirk."<sup>3</sup> Among the fleeing refugees were many guerrillas and their families.

When Col. McGee first heard of these partisans, he understood the value they presented to the US Army's attempts at unconventional warfare. Now, an opportunity arrived for the Army to produce such irregular units without pulling staff from other Army divisions, without a high cost to military staff or intensive training, and with troops whose experiences proved invaluable to the effort of retaking North Korea. Thus, in January 1951, FEC permitted McGee to establish

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<sup>3</sup> Allen Reed Millet, *Their War for Korea: American, Asian, and European Combatants and Civilians, 1945–1953* (Washington: Brassey's Inc., 2002), 25. The "Korean Dunkirk" was one of the largest military and refugee evacuations in American military history. It began on 24 December 1950, following the UN's defeat at the Chosin Reservoir. Around 100,000 US and ROK troops were evacuated from the east coast port of Hungnam while aiding another 100,000 refugees. Between December 1950–January 1951, thousands of North Korean men, women, and children escaped to nearby islands and Allied ships. Many men from these fleeing families became leaders of the UN partisan groups that developed shortly after. The event is covered in Daley, 5–10.

these North Korean guerrillas as an organized force under Eighth Army command.<sup>4</sup> Initially, the department operated under Eighth Army G-3 (operations), Miscellaneous Division. The title given to the command was “Attrition Section,” and the office employed only one member: McGee.

Two significant problems occurred due to the Attrition Section’s command structure. First, special operations often require access to intelligence and materiel from numerous military services and upper command divisions. Later military doctrine recommended placing Special Operations Forces under a Theater Command to ensure equality between unconventional and conventional military theaters when receiving these resources. However, this structure proved ineffective with the early unconventional warfare activities in 1950. In theory, putting partisan operations under Eighth Army control should not have disrupted the organization’s access to them. The more damaging problem faced by Attrition Section was the same as that suffered by the psychological warfare operations in Korea. Eighth Army placed these activities under a staff organization.

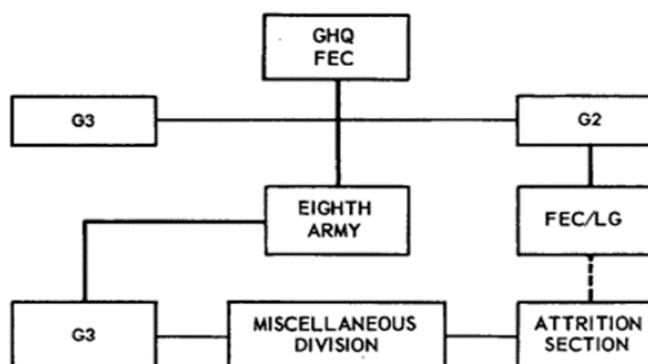
The Army Field Manual on guerrilla warfare states that unconventional warfare encompasses a combination of intelligence gathering and covert guerrilla operations. Placing irregular forces under G-2 or G-3 status limited the functionality of the units by giving them the means to pursue only one effectively.<sup>5</sup> Units under G-2 control are specifically concerned with gathering intelligence; teams under G-3 use intelligence and analysis to plan missions on the ground. Furthermore, only commanders from the technical branches of Eighth Army could issue

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<sup>4</sup> Rod Paschall, “Special Operations in Korea,” *Conflict* 7, no. 2 (1988): 158.

<sup>5</sup> US Department of the Army, *Organization and Conduct of Guerrilla Warfare*, Field Manual 31-21 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1966), 26.

orders for the partisans. Staff organizations only supplied recommendations. McGee fought the staff designation, but FEC and Eighth Army command failed to give him clear guidance on proceeding with partisan activities.



**Figure 2. Organization of Attrition Section, January 1951**  
 --- indicates staff coordination.<sup>6</sup>

Regardless of the appropriate placement of partisan operations command and the lack of clear guidance on organizing these units, McGee wasted no time preparing them for missions with the help of his newly appointed executive officer, Maj. William A. Burke. On 23 January 1951, Burke produced Plan Able, later called Operational Plan One, “a scheme for first training and equipping the partisans and then infiltrating them back to the mainland from their offshore island havens.”<sup>7</sup> This initial plan called for partisan intelligence operations behind enemy lines and minor provocation of the enemy’s rear. One of the top priorities outlined in Plan Able

<sup>6</sup> Cleaver, et al., *UN Partisan Warfare in Korea, 1951–1954* (Chevy Chase, MD: Headquarters, AFPE, Operations Research Office, Johns Hopkins University, 1956), Fig. A4, 36. Attrition Section coordinated directly with Eighth Army G-3 (operations), and occasionally with FEC G-2 (intelligence). Therefore, the section worked for the Army, but coordinated with FEC via the Far East Command Liaison Group (FEC/LG), which did not have direct authority over the section but instead oversaw and coordinated behind-the-lines activities in Korea regardless of the branch of the military it came from.

<sup>7</sup> Paschall, “Special Operations,” 159.

included recruiting more partisans for a planned UN offensive during the summer to retake the peninsula.

Before the Korean War, few guerrillas had combat experience or training. The primary occupations for these men included teaching or public service. Many partisan unit leaders formerly served as mayors, police officials, and civil servants, and most were educated at least through high school.<sup>8</sup> Only a handful claimed any military experience before the Korean War. The Army's Military History Detachment interviewed numerous partisan unit leaders, and only two served in the Japanese Army in World War II. Five others claimed experience in propaganda and intelligence work prior to their guerrilla activities. According to McGee, "They were a colorful group ranging in age from youths to elderly men. Some wore ragged civilian clothing, others were dressed in North Korean Army uniforms."<sup>9</sup> The primary motivation for McGee and the Eighth Army in establishing the partisan infantry was the development of the Army's unconventional warfare capabilities. In contrast, the reason for the enthusiastic and largely untrained partisans was the hope of reclaiming their homeland and ousting the Communists from power.

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<sup>8</sup> Daley, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Col. John H. McGee, quoted in Malcom, 21.

EXPECTED PAY-OFF FROM PARTISAN ACTIVITY		
Role	Situation A—limited objectives and stabilized situations	Situation B—complete victory and fluid situation
1. OVERT: actual operations behind enemy lines directed against personnel, material, or LofCs.	Pay-off insignificant owing to enhanced opportunities for enemy security controls.	Pay-off insignificant if emphasis is on overt loosely controlled activity in areas of peripheral importance.
2. COVERT: preparatory mission pending forward movement of regular forces.	Pay-off practically zero except for intelligence obtained.	Pay-off potentially high if guerrillas effectively trained (as demonstrated in World War II on both sides.)

Figure 3. Initial Evaluation of Partisan Activity Objectives. Source: Cleaver, et al., Table 1, page 2.

The Army heavily guarded the creation of the partisan units. Attrition Section's organization was so secret that many experienced veterans of guerrilla warfare in World War II knew nothing about its existence. This secrecy meant that few of the training personnel on the island bases, many of whom received little information about the project before agreeing to participate, were experienced in organizing and commanding guerrilla operations. Col. Malcom, one of those inexperienced officers, remarked that the Army's organizational instructions primarily involved "taking ground and holding it," even though these objectives did not align with the goals of partisan warfare. "Nowhere in [training] with the partisans was there any mention or any consideration of taking or holding territory."<sup>10</sup> Partisan instruction included weapons training, island hopping techniques, and working in small squads and platoons. The Army's failure to grasp the basic concepts of guerrilla warfare created numerous problems throughout the division's lifespan.

<sup>10</sup> Malcom, 71.

Discussions in earlier chapters indicate the military's history of ignorance and hostility aimed at unconventional warfare. The theoretical and strategic debates on unconventional methodology provided little doctrinal support through the mid-twentieth century. In *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, historian Robert Posen emphasized the importance of standardized doctrine.

Military doctrines are critical components of national security policy or grand strategy...I use the term "military doctrine" for the subcomponent of grand strategy that deals explicitly with military means. Two questions are important: *What* means shall be employed? and *How* shall they be employed? Priorities must be set among the various types of military forces available to the modern state. A set of prescriptions must be generated specifying how military forces should be structured and employed to respond to recognized threats and opportunities. Ideally, modes of cooperation between different types of forces should be specified.<sup>11</sup>

Military doctrine provides the guidelines by which armed forces create, structure, supply, and employ military units. The formation of McGee's guerrilla warfare section required these procedures. However, the military's refusal to accept such methods into traditional military parlance meant that in January 1951, no such doctrine existed within the United States military.

After the war, the Operations Research Office concluded that the partisan units failed to comply with standard US military doctrine on guerrilla warfare. They referred to the structure provided in Field Manual 31-21, *Organization and Conduct of Guerrilla Warfare*, which outlined the command-and-control logic of guerrillas and stipulated the best options for employing them in combat. Military historian Rod Paschall describes FM 31-21 as a "badly needed, authoritative publication that provided well reasoned methods to organize, control,

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<sup>11</sup> Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 13.

employ, and disband guerrilla forces.”<sup>12</sup> Despite the benefits provided by this field manual, postwar analyses of the partisans ignored the fact that the Army did not publish FM 31-21 until late 1951, long after McGee’s partisan activities began in North Korea. Attrition Section’s endeavors therefore “served as a sort of trial-and-error proving ground for the development of unconventional warfare doctrine.”<sup>13</sup> Rather than disregarding military protocol, as reported in the ORO’s lengthy report on partisan operations, the partisan warfare experiment supplied the necessary experience and resources for producing said doctrine.

With no information on the proper command structure of guerrilla operations, McGee made his own decisions on the organization of the partisans. The first step in developing these units included finding and establishing bases of operation for the thousands of partisans and US Army, Air Force, and Naval personnel needed for training. The Army established their first base, “William Able Base,” on Baengyong-do Island, approximately 120 miles north of the 38th Parallel and 15 miles west of mainland North Korea. The partisans called the island “Leopard Base” instead of William Able. Ed Evanhoe explained that they did so because “a leopard hunts its prey by stealth, makes a speedy attack, and kills quickly,” which seemed a decent description of the tasks partisans trained to undertake.<sup>14</sup> Leopard Base quickly became the headquarters for McGee’s operations. Due to the number of partisans, the Army established smaller bases on nearby islands for different partisan units, going as far north as Cho-do Island, approximately 40 miles northeast of Leopard Base. Finally, the Army established a third, smaller base on the east coast islet of Nan-do (or Al-som).

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<sup>12</sup> Paschall, “Special Operations,” 164.

<sup>13</sup> Nadel and Wright, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Ed Evanhoe, 46.

The small companies formed relatively naturally since most of the men serving in a unit hailed from the same province, thereby “sharing the same local interests and loyalties” and producing a clan mentality over the common good of the whole peninsula.<sup>15</sup> Shortly after establishing the training bases off the western coast, some partisan groups called themselves “Donkey squads.”<sup>16</sup> Fifteen of these squads emerged on Baengyong-do and its surrounding islands. Officially, leadership over these companies belonged to attached American officers who reported on their units’ training and operation activities, assisted in planning missions, supplied the partisans with weaponry and food (when available), and commanded their activities behind enemy lines.

Unofficially, partisans deferred to a leader chosen from within their ranks, typically a well-respected man from the community, often without formal military training.<sup>17</sup> For example, Chang Chae Hwa, a former merchant from Sincheon who led an anti-Communist group before fleeing the mainland, commanded Donkey-1. Donkey-4’s first leader, Chang Sok Lin, worked as a police official before helping to organize his unit. A former schoolteacher, Lee Jung Hok, led a group of college-aged men in Donkey-11 known simply as “the students.” Since most of these partisans were active before 1951, behind-the-lines activities progressed quickly.

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<sup>15</sup> Daley, 18.

<sup>16</sup> The origins of this nickname are unknown. Col. Malcom suggested the name came from a mistranslation of a speech Col. McGee gave in early 1951, in which his comparison of a “foolish horse” with a “wise mule” was translated to a “wise donkey,” a more familiar animal for the Koreans. Evanhoe suggested that it originated from the way the partisans walked due to the heavy material and munitions loads they carried on their backs. The Army’s Military History Detachment offered that in Korean culture, “mounting a donkey was traditionally a privilege of Korean officials.” This suggested that the partisans saw their activities as an honorable pursuit. Malcom, 56–57; Evanhoe, 46; Daley, 21.

<sup>17</sup> Daley, 17.



Many partisan activities took place in North Korea's western provinces. This is primarily for two reasons: 1) partisan units operated more comfortably in familiar territory, and 2) the limited intelligence provided to McGee included information about the western provinces. Because McGee received little intelligence from FEC or Eighth Army, he relied heavily on information provided through his personal relationship with Col. Harold K. Johnson, commander of I Corps, G-3. Since Johnson received information that directly affected the I Corps' activities in the west, McGee's partisans primarily acted in the same regions.<sup>18</sup>

The first Donkey squads began infiltrating the mainland and forming bases within the mountains in March 1951.<sup>19</sup> The most common assaults included raiding enemy encampments along the NKPA's rear. The UN restricted Americans from entering the North Korean mainland. The ORO stated that "the majority of operations were not observed by US personnel, and no means for evaluating partisan effectiveness was developed."<sup>20</sup> Col. Malcom and others interviewed by the Military History Detachment suggested that numerous Army personnel joined partisan groups behind the lines in North Korea for short missions.<sup>21</sup> However, for more extended operations, the partisans operated independently, using the plans and preparations set forth by the US Army.

Partisan operations included more than just raiding. They performed amphibious assaults along the coastlines since the terrain and layout of the coasts made it difficult for the enemy to camp there. The partisans knew these coastlines well and easily moved on and off the mainland.

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<sup>18</sup> Paschall, "Special Operations," 165.

<sup>19</sup> Cleaver, et al., 42.

<sup>20</sup> Cleaver, et al., 2.

<sup>21</sup> Malcom, 83; Daley, 29.

Interior units operated for select periods, using their temporary mountain bases.<sup>22</sup> Attacking the enemy rear, while time-consuming and small in terms of observable benefits, paid off in 1952 when the extent of raiding in NKPA and CCF camps provoked the Communists to attack partisan bases along the west coast, thereby dividing the force they applied on the 38th Parallel.<sup>23</sup> Partisans frequently attacked bridges, destroying them to disrupt supply and communication lines. Finding food became an essential aspect of partisan operations when a severe food shortage overwhelmed the peninsula in 1952. Foraging for food within North Korean civilian communities became common, as North Koreans and the Chinese struggled to feed their troops during the conflict, and many partisan operations took place in mountainous regions that produced very little vegetation.

Another aspect of the Eighth Army's goals for the partisan units was overcoming the intelligence crisis. Since the North Koreans blended into the racial and cultural norms behind enemy lines, many partisans became "linecrossers" and moved quickly back and forth between the UN and NKPA frontlines to gather intelligence. They faced significant hardships gathering intelligence from the frightened and submissive North Korean population, and intelligence work incurred a "suicidal rate of failure."<sup>24</sup> Partisans found collecting data from the interior difficult and returning it to the proper authority even harder. Because of the secrecy of the Attrition Section, guerrillas crossing back into UN territory often faced heavy scrutiny, possible imprisonment, and occasionally, death.

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<sup>22</sup> Daley, 32.

<sup>23</sup> Paschall, "Special Operations," 165.

<sup>24</sup> Aldrich, et al., 3.

Partisans collected cattle and supplies, weapons, POWs, intelligence reports from local villages, documents from NKPA stations, and performed demolitions to enemy communication and supply lines. McGee's partisans worked fast and hard, primarily because the fight was not for victory but for returning to their homes after the war. Partisans also supported other military branches throughout the war. They acted as spotters for Air Force and Naval operations, providing them with intelligence from the North Korean interior and sometimes observing and assessing the results of their actions.<sup>25</sup> Between July 1950–January 1952, the partisans rescued an estimated 31 percent of all downed Pacific Fleet Air Force pilots out of North Korea.<sup>26</sup> They also frequently worked with the Army and the UN to liberate POW camps far north of the 38th Parallel.

Month	No. of actions	Percentages of actions <sup>b</sup>							
		Enemy troops	Tactical installations	Transport	Supplies and storage	Civil administration	Intelligence	Naval gun-fire observation	Other
May	77	52	—	21	10	1	1	8	6
June	72	47	8	18	10	3	1	7	4
July	83	25	23	29	6	6	1	6	4
August	75	63	1	11	15	1	3	7	7
September	127	65	1	4	4	—	1	22	3
October	118	64	2	7	11	2	—	9	6
November	132	33	14	5	13	2	—	30	2
May–Nov	684	52.1	6.7	11.3	9.2	1.9	0.8	13.8	4.2

Figure 4. Partisan Activities by Type, May–Nov 1951. Source: Cleaver, et al., Table A5, page 50. All numbers are based only on actions reported to the Eighth Army.

<sup>25</sup> Daley, 41.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence V. Schuetta, *Guerrilla Warfare and Airpower in Korea, 1950–1953* (Maxwell Airforce Base, AL: Aerospace Studies Institute, 1964), 143.

As the Donkey units assaulted rear-area targets, the Army organized Baker Section, an airborne partisan unit under the combined command of the US and British Armies. By mid-1951, the war stood at a stalemate along the 38th Parallel. The Army determined that airdropping partisans behind the lines provided the best opportunity to continue partisan operations for intelligence purposes. The Army tasked Baker Section with coordinating these airborne partisan activities. However, the training camps lacked proper resources and facilities and offered only rudimentary lessons. Trainees often learned how to perform a parachute landing by jumping off a moving vehicle. The lack of adequate facilities resulted in numerous injuries to the partisans during training.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the Army reworked the training schedule from a four-week course split evenly between jump training and mission training to four weeks of mission-oriented training and a single day of parachute school. They no longer allowed partisans to do a practice jump; the partisans' first jump out of an airplane occurred over the drop zone of North Korea, not in a safe and controlled environment.

Unlike the early successes of the Donkey units in antagonizing the enemy along the west coast, Baker Section failed to find the same success in its organization and implementation. Most analysts determined after the war that these airborne missions almost always failed.<sup>28</sup> The hasty organization and frighteningly inept training for partisan airborne units unsurprisingly led to disaster. The UN willingly sacrificed North Korean partisans for intelligence it later used in peace negotiations with North Korean and Chinese delegates in mid-1951. Yet, despite knowing it meant almost certain death, the partisans continued to train for airborne missions, which

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<sup>27</sup> Evanhoe, 47.

<sup>28</sup> Malcom, 133.

yielded little results. The ORO's evaluation of partisan airborne activities is included in the Appendix.

The first official airborne unit, Virginia I, made up of US personnel and partisans, dropped on 15 March 1951. The goal of the drop included infiltrating and destroying a rail supply route which acted as an essential communication line between CCF and NKPA troops. Virginia I was led by then-Baker Section Commander Capt. Eugene Perry, who selected his team from within the soon-to-be-inactivated Eighth Army Rangers with the help of McGee and an operations officer from G-3, Miscellaneous Division. The mission ended disastrously. Before the jump, Capt. Perry was taken off the mission, meaning the group jumped into North Korea without a team leader. The parachutists dropped ten miles south of their intended target and ended up scattered across a mountain range. The freezing temperatures caused their radios and flashlights to fail. The railway tunnel meant for demolitions was surrounded by enemy troops. The evacuation of the Rangers and partisans similarly failed, with most of the group either killed or taken as POWs.<sup>29</sup> The calamitous Virginia I drop and the failure of a second airborne operation, Operation Spitfire, in June 1951 made many commanders cautious of attempting any more airborne operations in 1951.<sup>30</sup>

After these first two operations, the Army refused to send American or British personnel on airborne missions into North Korea. This decision did not go unnoticed by the partisans or the

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<sup>29</sup> The Virginia I drop is recounted in multiple sources: Cleaver, et al., 52.; Black, 85–88.; Evanhoe, 47–62.; Malcom, 134–135.; Paschall, *Command and Control*, 22–23. Lt. John Thornton, an USAF pilot sent to retrieve the remaining Virginia I team members, and Eighth Army Ranger Cpl. Martin Watson were left behind and eventually captured. North Korea released both during Operation Big Switch, the transfer of POWs back to their homes at the end of the war in 1953. John W. Thornton, *Believed to be Alive* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 63–99.

<sup>30</sup> Cleaver, et al., 52–53. Operation Spitfire's objective included establishing a guerrilla base of operations behind enemy lines, but this mission also failed.

American personnel commanding them. Resentment brewed over the UN's protection of its (often white) troops over the safety of the partisans.

Everyone was promised evacuation if wounded, but in reality only the seriously wounded American or British personnel would actually be [medevac'd] because evacuation required a helicopter and a pilot. These were scarce, and Eighth Army was reluctant to risk these for evacuating non-American or non-British personnel.<sup>31</sup>

The Army's disregard for the health and safety of North Korean partisans greatly impacted their effectiveness in intelligence gathering and their ability to enter and exit hostile territory safely.

The UN viewed the many partisan deaths as a minor loss. Undoubtedly, racial tensions affected the relationship between the US military and its foreign allies.<sup>32</sup> Several reports by partisans of training-related mistreatment included accusations of racial bias against the Koreans.

Subsequent airborne operations emphasized raiding and rescue missions as their primary objective. Mustang Raider teams I and II prepared for deployment near the end of 1951 to rescue Maj. Gen. William F. Dean, who had gone missing over a year prior.<sup>33</sup> However, the pre-operation reconnaissance missions resulted in fatalities and the capture of US officers, and the military canceled these operations. They then sent Mustang III in January 1952 near the Yalu River, close to the POW camp where the Army believed Dean resided.<sup>34</sup> The drop failed, and the Mustang III partisans never made contact again. Mustang IV–VI dropped in March 1952. Their objective included developing escape routes for POWs in the vicinity of various camps in North

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<sup>31</sup> Evanhoe, 118–123.

<sup>32</sup> Christan I. Archer, et al., *World History of Warfare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 570.

<sup>33</sup> Evanhoe, 118–123.

<sup>34</sup> To keep information about this mission quiet, the reported parameters of the mission listed it as a railway sabotage mission. See Appendix.

Korea; the former showed signs of success but disappeared six days after landing, while the latter two groups perished immediately.

The Army suspended partisan airborne operations until October 1952, likely because Donkey units used the warm summer months to perform numerous guerrilla activities that required full-time Army support. Further airborne missions continued at the end of 1952, as the Air Force struggled to contain a buildup of enemy supplies near the 38th Parallel. The Air Force flew near-constant operations over enemy territory to stop this as peace talks grew more heated. A failure to contain this stockpile in 1952 meant the UN desperately needed ground troops to help. The Army could not spare Donkey Units, as they were kept busy by these stockpiles along the coast. Therefore, despite the failure of the previous jumps, airborne operations through Baker Section continued in October with Mustang VII and VIII.

These two operations proved fruitful, with both groups reporting back to Eighth Army Headquarters that they successfully destroyed enemy rail lines. Unfortunately, the Army recovered neither team. Jesse James I–III dropped at the end of December; none made contact after making their jumps. In January 1953, an airborne unit designated Green Dragon parachuted into the interior to establish a partisan base outside Pyongyang. They remained out of contact for two months.<sup>35</sup> At that time, Baker Section (also known as Aviary Section) dropped Boxer I–IV

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<sup>35</sup> In March 1953, Green Dragon reported to headquarters that their numbers had been reduced to 31 from both desertions and enemy capture after landing with 97. In April, this team reported that they had recovered five downed US pilots. In response, Baker Section dropped a second group of over 50 partisans with supplies and made plans to extract the Green Dragon team and the five pilots. Upon initiation of this plan, the UN met with heavy enemy fire and the plan failed. They assumed that Green Dragon had been infiltrated by those loyal to North Korea and deemed any further reports back to headquarters suspicious. It is unclear if the five US pilots existed. Cleaver, et al., 91.

in early February to sabotage railways on the east coast; they lost all four. The Army then dropped Hurricane in late March, and this group quickly lost contact.

The implementation of Charlie Section—later called Taskforce Kirkland, or simply Kirkland—on the east coast went only marginally better. Fewer resistance groups formed along the east coast in 1950. The Army discovered the Miryang Guerrilla Battalion, a ROK-supported guerrilla unit that became operational during the early months of the war when the UN retreated to the Pusan Perimeter. 1st Lt. William S. Harrison, a World War II paratrooper with the 139th Airborne Engineer Battalion, trained these partisans, though Harrison did not command the group. By late April 1951, the ROK Army, already showing distrust of any guerrilla activity, transferred the entire battalion into US hands. Charlie Section then fell into a dispute with the CIA over who had jurisdiction north of the 38th Parallel. The CIA already had operatives working in the region and claimed that having partisans in the area would only compromise the intelligence agency's operations. The Eighth Army agreed to stay south of the port city of Wonsan so as not to interfere with CIA operations ongoing in that area.

The Army established Task Force Kirkland's headquarters on the islet Nan-do (Al-som), ten miles off the mainland coast and half a mile south of the 38th Parallel. Only about 300 yards long, the islet's height allowed for ample use of radio frequencies. The partisans that could not fit there created a base in the South Korean port city of Jumunjin.<sup>36</sup> Like the west coast partisans, east coast activities involved harassment of enemy troops and support of conventional military movements. Only one percent of partisan actions during the war occurred on the east coast, while 93 percent occurred within the Hwanghae Province.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Evanhoe, 73.

<sup>37</sup> Fondacaro, 99.



The original objectives of the UN at the outset of US Army partisan warfare operations envisioned a complete retaking of North Korea. Around June 1951, the CCF pushed the UN south of the 38th Parallel, where they remained for the rest of the war. This stalemate brought about a significant change in war aims; armistice discussions began at political summits and continued until the official ceasefire agreement in 1953. Yet, despite the dramatic change to UN war objectives, no revision of partisan operational objectives occurred, and no one informed the partisans of the alteration to their original purpose. Throughout 1951–1952, the partisans continued conducting raids along the coast at great personal risk and trained nonstop for the nonexistent UN counteroffensive.

Col. McGee rotated out of command in July 1951, replaced by Lt. Col. Jay Vanderpool.<sup>38</sup> Like McGee, Vanderpool's experience in World War II unconventional warfare occurred alongside the Filipino guerrillas. After the war, Vanderpool transferred his talents to the CIA before returning to the Army to continue developments in Attrition Section, now known as the 8240th Army Unit, United Nations Partisan Infantry, Korea (UNPIK). Vanderpool "nurtured what McGee and Burke had created, and he intensified the pace of operations."<sup>39</sup> Vanderpool's goals included increasing the size of partisan forces to "a strength of 21,000 armed partisans," as well as increasing the quantity and quality of their weapons, establishing more efficient means of transportation and communication, and continuing to antagonize the enemy. The goals outlined by Vanderpool's staff echoed almost exactly those outlined in Burke's Operational Plan One.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Piasecki, "John H. McGee," 31.

<sup>39</sup> Paschall, "Special Operations," 162.

<sup>40</sup> Paschall, *A Study in Command and Control: Special Operations in Korea, 1951–1953* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army Military History Institute, 1988), 12.

In July 1951, FEC took control of all behind-the-lines operations, including partisan operations. This move did not directly impact UNPIK, as they steadily increased their missions into mainland North Korea. Partisans still received recommendations from Eighth Army G-3 staff and coordinated with Army personnel. The change only meant that the partisans took orders from two separate divisions instead of one. It did little to clarify the command structure of the unconventional warfare section. Col. Malcom, working directly with the partisans during this time, described the move to FEC as a cosmetic change to “micromanage something many traditional officers did not understand and did not care for,” making the changes necessary only for the sake of appeasing upper command.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the publication of FM 31-21 in October, no reevaluation or restructuring of UNPIK’s command or mission objectives occurred through the end of 1951. The Far East Command Liaison Detachment, responsible for coordinating behind-the-lines intelligence operations, completely absorbed partisan operations into FEC G-2. This moved the partisans from an operations division to an intelligence division. Like before, this staff change did not disrupt partisan operations and appeared only a superficial development. Around the same time, the UN and FEC established the Combined Command for Reconnaissance Activities in Korea (discussed in chapter two) to clarify the murky existence of unconventional methods during the war.

Combined Command provided the same services as the Special Activities Group early in the war, attempting to produce a command structure for the numerous intelligence and unconventional warfare operations taking place through various agencies, in various locations, at

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<sup>41</sup> Malcom, 22–24.

various times throughout the war. Like SAG, it oversaw all intelligence and unconventional offices within the US, British, and ROK militaries and the Joint Activities Command liaison office between the military and the CIA.<sup>42</sup> According to Col. Michael E. Haas, CCRAK represented the complete disaster of unconventional warfare development occurring broadly across the UN at the time.

[The] UN unconventional warfare campaign had degenerated by late 1951 into a “mob for jobs” world in which competing bureaucracies offered at best only a token nod towards the “strategic” unconventional warfare campaign. The fundamental problem of course was that no strategic unconventional warfare campaign had ever been developed, despite eighteen months of combat, thousands of UN casualties, and the departure of MacArthur and his clique.<sup>43</sup>

Like the other UN attempts to restructure UNPIK’s command structure, CCRAK provided minor developmental advancements to any unconventional warfare activities in Korea. Unlike the Special Activities Group, CCRAK operated independently from Army staff organizations, separate from G-2 or G-3. For this reason, some military historians consider it the first attempt by the US military to create a Special Forces Theater Command.

By April 1952, the efforts of the Combined Command and the 8240th Army Unit appeared useless to many traditional commanders at FEC.<sup>44</sup> Despite the number of partisans, raids, and covert operations increasing throughout 1952, little changed in the location of these

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<sup>42</sup> The Combined Command for Reconnaissance Activities in Korea was a vague title for a very important reason; it would do FEC no good to have an obvious covert operations unit amid a rapidly growing political war. CCRAK interchangeably stood for Covert, Clandestine, and Related Activities, Korea. Michael E. Haas, *Apollo’s Warriors: US Air Force Special Operations During the Cold War* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 1997), 16.

<sup>43</sup> Michael E. Haas, *In the Devil’s Shadow: UN Special Operations during the Korean War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 38.

<sup>44</sup> By this point, Far East Command became known as Army Forces Far East (AFFE). To avoid more confusion about titles and acronyms, this narrative will continue to use FEC to discuss the UN’s military army during the Korean War.

activities or the division's mission objectives. By the end of the year, the partisans remained without a proper command structure or any unit objectives. Vanderpool's section recruited so many new partisans throughout 1952 that a fourth section, known as Wolfpack, was established off the island of Kanghwa-do, just south of the disputed Northern Limit Line, which serves as the maritime line between North and South Korea.<sup>45</sup> The failure of the Army or FEC to reappraise the guerrilla units' purpose throughout 1952 contributed to the notion of partisan warfare's ineffectiveness in Korea.<sup>46</sup> Without a target to aim for, the partisans never knew to change their approach.

Month	No. of actions	Percentages of actions							
		Enemy troops	Tactical installations	Transport	Supplies and storage	Civil administration	Intelligence	Naval gun-fire observation	Other
1951									
December	41	73	2	5	10	—	—	5	5
1952									
January <sup>b</sup>	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
February <sup>b</sup>	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
March	29	48	—	—	—	—	31	10	10
April	52	52	4	4	—	2	19	13	6
May	105	37	5	5	3	4	31	9	7
June	193	41	3	10	5	4	34	5	3
July	250	42	2	12	2	5	10	6	17
August	293	51	6	10	3	7	17	—	6
September	337	44	5	11	1	9	26	—	4
October	277	47	5	8	6	7	17	1	9
November	384	51	1	17	5	12	8	—	5
December	293	50	6	15	5	13	4	1	5
1953									
January	249	51	3	16	5	11	5	2	4
February	211	46	5	13	8	18	8	1	6
March	243	42	2	19	5	14	7	1	10
Dec 51– Mar 53	2955	48.5	4.1	12.8	4.5	9.9	14.3	2.2	3.7

Figure 5. Partisan Activities by Type, Dec 1951–Mar 1953. Source: Cleaver, et al., Table B9, page 87. All numbers are based only on actions reported to the Eighth Army.

<sup>45</sup> Michael E. Krivdo, "The Army's Guerrilla Command in Korea, Part II: The Rest of the Story," *Veritas* 9, no. 1 (2013): 7.

<sup>46</sup> Fondacaro, 35–36.

Finally, in January 1953, the new Commander in Chief, Far East, Gen. Mark W. Clark, requested that UNPIK command produce a new set of objectives for partisan operations. With the UN offensive canceled, one might assume the Army took a different tact. However, Plan Phase I and Plan Phase IIA and IIB made no significant changes to partisan activities and never received command approval from FEC or the Army.<sup>47</sup> Each planning phase spanned a specific amount of time. From January to March 1953, Plan Phase I called for the building up of troop strength while agitating the enemy.<sup>48</sup> Far East Command claimed it wanted 40,000 partisan troops by July 1953. This buildup partially stemmed from the intense political negotiations between UN and Communist officials that caused major security concerns along the 38th Parallel in early 1953. Furthermore, Plan Phase I stipulated a continuation of guerrilla actions against the enemy rear, intended to inflict maximum casualties, capture prisoners, destroy enemy supplies, and disrupt communication lines. These activities did not change from the partisans' original function.

Plan Phases IIA and IIB likewise assumed that partisans would remain "on active defense."<sup>49</sup> From March to September 1953, Phase IIA outlined an expansion of partisan bases north of Wonsan on the east coast but otherwise remained identical to Burke's original plans. Plan Phase IIB added nothing to IIA save for expecting an even higher number of partisans. However, the UN quickly halted partisan activities in April 1953 with an adjustment to Plan Phase IIA; they discarded Plan IIB once the truce was called. Throughout the peace negotiations,

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<sup>47</sup> Paschall, 171.

<sup>48</sup> Kiper, "Unconventional Warfare in Korea: Forgotten Aspects of the 'Forgotten War.'" *Special Warfare*, 16, no. 2 (2003), [link.gale.com/apps/doc/A113304591/AONE?u=nhc\\_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=f06b8f24](http://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A113304591/AONE?u=nhc_main&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=f06b8f24) (Accessed 9 Feb 2022), 4.

<sup>49</sup> Cleaver, et al., 63.

the UN used the threat of guerrilla warfare to force a compromise with the Chinese and North Koreans. In the final agreement, the UN agreed to disband the guerrilla units in exchange for the release of UN POWs.<sup>50</sup>

Throughout the entirety of partisan activities, the military's attitude towards unconventional warfare remained, at best, ambivalent, and at worst, antagonistic. Many reasons for this exist; traditionalists within the Army bureaucracy believed that only conventional warfare won wars. Racial prejudices between whites and nonwhites created a natural barrier between American and North Korean troops. The language barrier prohibited lengthy dialogue between the Army, UN, and partisans about the nature of guerrilla warfare and the role of the partisans in the war. Hostility towards the partisans ramped up, particularly in 1953, when recruitment of guerrillas from within the South Korean population brought the whole operation under suspicion. ROK officials saw partisans as either draft-dodgers or Communist infiltrators and refused to support their operations. At no point during the Korean War did the UN or the Eighth Army officially claim responsibility for these guerrillas, despite FEC pushing for further recruitment and the Army directly involving itself in their training. The final armistice agreements dramatically reduced partisan strength, down to 20,000 partisans in July 1953, with many more dropping out as the war's end drew nearer.<sup>51</sup> The UN transferred responsibility for the partisans to the 8250th ROK Army in August 1953.

The relationship between the ROK military and the partisans continued to devolve throughout the end of 1953. South Korea greatly distrusted the partisans' motives and intentions, as many of the partisans previously expressed anti-Syngman Rhee sentiments (then-President of

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<sup>50</sup> Paschall, "Special Operations," 172.

<sup>51</sup> Cleaver, et al., 63–64, 109–112.

South Korea). The induction of many South Korean partisans who never enlisted in the ROK Army caused many to consider partisans as “little more than hoodlums who were exploiting the security regulations” to escape punishment for “lawless behavior.”<sup>52</sup> Rather than joining an official military organization, the ROK felt partisans chose the easier path. This distrust and anger ensured that the 8250th, created to protect and provide for the now-homeless North Korean partisans, failed to support them upon their transfer into the conventional Army.

The North Korean guerrillas showed equal resentment towards the South Koreans. In 1951, these partisans expressed an interest in serving within the conventional ROK Army, but the Eighth Army began preparing its Attrition Section before this occurred. The partisans’ ensuing aggression against ROK officers stemmed from the belief that South Korea had rejected them two years prior. According to the US military’s analysis of the anger felt on both sides, the ORO determined that the partisans received unfair treatment upon arrival to the ROK Army. Had this not occurred, the partisans may have proved incredibly useful as a “long-term asset...to the [South Korean] government than to any other concerned in the Korean War, and they could have been developed into a special force of continuing significance.”<sup>53</sup> Instead, partisans retained no stability, status, or home following the truce negotiations, and they found themselves reluctantly controlled by a military that did not want them. The ROK officially disbanded UNPIK in early January 1954. Since no organization claimed responsibility for the guerrillas, many left the war without a military pension or recognition of combat duties performed.

The United Nations Partisan Infantry in Korea solved some of the problems of earlier American special operations ventures. The racial and language barriers that stifled the abilities of

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<sup>52</sup> Malcolm, 184; Cleaver, et al., 118.

<sup>53</sup> Cleaver, et al., 142.

the Army Raiders and Eighth Army Rangers did not apply to the North Korean partisans. US troops assigned to partisan operations performed duties that fell in line with those expected of Special Forces personnel. They engaged in unconventional and covert activities behind the lines, working with and directing indigenous guerrillas with political and military objectives. The Army estimated that one partisan cost between \$250–400 per month. While the US Army later claimed the cost of maintaining the partisan units outweighed the benefits of their activities, partisans did not cost near that of an Army Ranger. Furthermore, a large portion of partisan supplies were intended for the American personnel deployed with the partisans and not for the partisans themselves.<sup>54</sup> Since these Americans needed supplies regardless of which division they served with during the war, these costs do not represent additional resources afforded the partisans. More than any other area, partisans supplied a seemingly unlimited resource that did not draw personnel from other military services.

The casualty rate of partisans did not heavily influence the US military because it was not required to supply replacements. The callousness of the US and UN towards the partisan death toll is unsurprising, though it raises questions about the morality of the Eighth Army's partisan warfare activities. The partisans gained very little from participating with the UN, especially with its unwillingness to offer a legitimate claim or responsibility for them. The Army's Military History Detachment provided a rather shocking concession about Eighth Army partisans:

When a partisan is killed, any serviceable garments and equipment will be stripped from him for the sake of his comrades. There are no pensions or government life insurance or any manner of relief for widows and orphans. (Anyway, the families of most are behind the enemy's lines.) Indeed the future has little to offer them unless they win. They are not likely to return to Hwanghae-

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<sup>54</sup> Paschall, *Command and Control*, 44.



do and resume normal lives there so long as the Communists remain. A dreary outlook.<sup>55</sup>

The partisans provided a service for the US Army that received little pay, little evaluation, and even less satisfaction. Incredibly, the ORO further noted that in many cases, the US Army tasked these guerrillas with missions “far beyond partisan capabilities.”<sup>56</sup> Yet, they bore the brunt of the Army’s disappointment.

Partisan activities helped the war effort in many ways outside of being one of the first sanctioned Special Operations Forces in American military history. The ORO determined three different measurable outcomes of partisan operations: casualties inflicted, supplies and intelligence captured or destroyed, and the establishment of counterguerrilla actions on the part of the enemy.<sup>57</sup> Enemy casualties are difficult to measure for conventional and unconventional missions, regardless of time, place, or resources. Based on the reported numbers, in 1952, the guerrillas participated in 2,289 operations, claiming 25,726 enemy casualties and 526 POWs, an estimated 70 percent improvement over their 1951 statistics.<sup>58</sup> These numbers suggest that although the areas of concentrated force seemed negligible, partisans produced results. The capture of intelligence correlates to the number of POWs taken, as they represented a large bulk of the military’s intelligence sources during the war. Furthermore, raiding for supplies and weapons commonly occurred during these operations.

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<sup>55</sup> Daley, 23.

<sup>56</sup> Cleaver, et al., 99–103, 135.

<sup>57</sup> Cleaver, et al., 16.

<sup>58</sup> Paschall, *Command and Control*, 25; based on numbers compiled in Cleaver, et al., 50–87. The Operations Research Office occasionally found a lack of documentation on specific unit actions, as sometimes no one filed an after-action report. Because of this, the information documented by the ORO and paraphrased by Paschall is based only on those reported actions. One must assume some exaggeration of figures, though studies mentioned in Paschall’s work note that an exaggeration of casualties is a common trait among soldiers and is not unique for partisan operations.

The establishment of counter guerrilla forces along the western coast verified the efficacy of partisan actions. Command in Chief Gen. Clark confirmed that enemy troops displayed a buildup in counter guerrilla forces beginning in the winter of 1951.

[In] the winter of 1951–52 [the Chinese Communists] began a great counter guerrilla campaign against the underground. A promise of amnesty was made via wall posters and newspapers, and with the promise went the threat of extermination for holdouts. For a time this counter guerrilla campaign worried us in headquarters but it soon became apparent that the guerrillas were not going to break...<sup>59</sup>

There appeared numerous reports in 1951–1952 of the appearance of above-average enemy strength along the coastline.<sup>60</sup> This suggested a deep apprehension of guerrilla activities from the Chinese and North Korean militaries. Some historians argue that this response occurred due to the fear of amphibious assaults along the coast. However, this enemy buildup happened after partisan operations in the same region increased. This correlation lends credence to the belief that partisan attacks caused the expansion of enemy soldiers on the west coast.

The partisans played a crucial role in the overall development of US Army Special Warfare capabilities. Their efforts solved many problems of the earlier irregular activities, yet numerous issues remained. There still existed an unwillingness to accept guerrilla operations into the arsenal of American military experience, despite the Army developing a field manual specifically to address this type of warfare. Inexperience and training ranked high on the list of unsolved issues with the Army's special operations objectives, as well as the inability of the Army to commit to a command structure that provided all the necessities for Special Warfare.

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<sup>59</sup> Mark W. Clark, *From the Danube to the Yalu*, 1<sup>st</sup> TAB Edition (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: TAB Books, 1988), 212.

<sup>60</sup> Cleaver, et al., 99; Malcolm, 172.

Finally, the failure of the military to produce doctrine that it also abided further hindered the efforts of special operations development in the US Army.

Like psywar activities in Korea, the unconventional units suffered from the political landscape of the Korean War. In mid-1951, the President and Congress announced that they intended to compromise with Korea to end the war. This change in military strategy limited the activities of the Eighth Army.<sup>61</sup> Despite the separation of unconventional and psychological warfare operations in Korea, both operated under the same staff coordination, Combined Command (CCRAK). The emphasis on a need for intelligence in the psywar division continued to grow throughout the war. The unconventional warfare developments provided new avenues for gaining intelligence and access to civilians and enemy troops in ways the psychological warfare staff never could. By the middle of 1952, Gen. McClure's Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare and his team recognized the need to combine the psychological and irregular activities within the Army. However, neither FEC nor the Department of the Army cared to coordinate efforts between these operations in Korea. The Army needed to take one more step to combine the two in combat: giving them an official home, together, in the Special Forces School at Fort Bragg.

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<sup>61</sup> Black, 179.

## Chapter 6: The Psychological Warfare School & US Army Special Warfare Center

Creating something “new” in an established organization is extremely difficult, especially within a military bureaucracy. Creating a new organization within the military required establishing a new strategic concept into regular military theory and proving its necessity for future engagements. This challenge is exponentially greater when the new concept includes developing an elite force. An elite force is only necessary when their operations’ underlying concept or objective is uncommon or involves a higher degree of risk than activities undertaken by conventional military divisions. Justifying the training of an elite force for a new branch means proving that there is no “unnecessary overlapping or redundancy of [the elite force’s] functions and capabilities with those of other units.”<sup>1</sup> Ensuring the continued development of psychological and irregular warfare capabilities in the Army required their proponents to prove the necessity for this new type of warfare.

The Korean War showed significant flaws in the Army’s psychological operations. Staff organizations hindered the efforts of the OCPW to perform their duties promptly and limited the availability of resources. Under Army G-2, the team had no access to operations staff to disseminate and spread US propaganda materials. Acting under Army G-3 provided the psywar unit with an operations structure, but restricted its access to intelligence. The Psychological Warfare Branch struggled under the restrictive nature of FEC and Army hierarchies, most of whom showed little support for the office’s activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Paddock, 127.

The unconventional warfare operations of the Korean War showed similar problems. The Army Raiders and Eighth Army Rangers struggled to perform under a weak and confusing command structure. Failure to correct this problem through the Army's partisan warfare efforts further harmed the development of guerrilla activities. Little coordination between military branches occurred despite many operations requiring ground, naval, and air support.<sup>2</sup> The Army failed to take advantage of the partisans' skills—as it had with the Army Rangers—and instead paid little attention to the value of these teams in unconventional warfare tactics. The constant changing of command staff over partisan operations reflected the Army's inability and unwillingness to understand irregular warfare. The Army's failure to employ experienced or specifically trained special operations staff during this period compounded the deficiencies in Raider, Ranger, and partisan operations. A postwar study of these operations identified the ineffective command structure and lack of experienced officers as causing severe limitations in the abilities and efficiency of unconventional warfare in Korea.<sup>3</sup>

The lack of coordination between the psychological and unconventional warfare units made it difficult to see the similarities in their problems regarding resources, personnel, and training. However, as early as 1950, Gen. McClure showed a solid determination to combine these operations under one command.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, in 1951, Col. McGee pleaded with the Eighth Army to allow partisans to operate “under the separate special staff division for Psychological Operations.”<sup>5</sup> McGee recognized that the unconventional nature of partisan and psychological

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<sup>2</sup> Paschall, “Special Operations,” 168.

<sup>3</sup> Cleaver, et al., 3.

<sup>4</sup> Paddock, 111.

<sup>5</sup> Fondacaro, 64.

warfare complemented one another and should necessarily coordinate operations. His partisans engaged in some minor forms of psychological warfare throughout their activities in North Korea. They dropped leaflets proclaiming their role in terrorizing NKPA and CCF troops and “utilized “black” propaganda cards...[blaming] the Chinese for acts of wonton collateral damage.”<sup>6</sup> Psywar materials made the guerrillas’ presence known behind enemy lines and stirred the civilian population to action. The OCPW, the unconventional warfare sector, and the office of Army Secretary Pace viewed the merging of these operations as vital for future Special Warfare activities.

Numerous military officers proved unwilling to include unconventional training within the Army. McClure struggled to demonstrate the legitimacy of guerrilla warfare operations, a task particularly difficult as the Army moved more control of unconventional warfare to the CIA.<sup>7</sup> If the JCS and the military—particularly the Army—began to see the CIA as the go-to division for unconventional warfare operations, the military might lose its ability to command and control such functions. The continued insistence by various special operations divisions over the need to combine these activities eventually pressured the Army to establish an official training center for unconventional and psychological activities.

Initially, the only training program for special operations in the US Army occurred at McClure’s Psychological Warfare Training Center in Fort Riley, KS. Out of this center came the Army’s 1st Radio Broadcast and Loudspeaker Group, which entered the Korean conflict in July 1951. As the first graduates began appearing from this school between late 1950–early 1951, McClure wished to include unconventional warfare training for his staff. He also wanted the

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<sup>6</sup> Fondacaro, 101.

<sup>7</sup> Paddock, 133.

training center moved to a more centralized post than Fort Riley.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, he and his cadre of experienced personnel began forming the Special Operations Division, a new organization which sought to combine psywar instruction with unconventional operations training.

In May 1952, the Army opened the Psychological Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, NC. Fort Bragg's position as one of the largest military centers in the world cemented psychological warfare as the future of military advancement. Initially, the Psychological Warfare School maintained a provisional status. This label allowed the Army to disable the school at any time and implied the continued unwillingness of the military to integrate psychological and unconventional warfare into standard military practice. It also allowed the Army to withhold some of the necessary funding to run the school. In October 1952, Army General Order Number 92 rescinded the provisional designation and made the Psychological Warfare School a functional service school.<sup>9</sup>

The Psychological Warfare Center consisted of the following: the Psychological Warfare School, the 6th Radio Broadcast & Loudspeaker Group, a Psychological Warfare Board, and the newly established Special Forces Groups. McClure assigned Col. Charles N. Karlstad, a respected training officer during World War I and II, as the center's first commander. Karlstad took charge of producing the initial guidelines and objectives for the center and mapped out the training for the new Special Forces Groups.<sup>10</sup> Two separate training departments emerged within the new center, the Psychological Operations Department and the Special Forces Department. Lt.

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<sup>8</sup> Paddock, 128.

<sup>9</sup> Ian D. W. Sutherland, *Special Forces of the United States Army, 1952–1982* (San Jose, CA: R. James Bender Publishing, 1990), 207.

<sup>10</sup> Michael E. Krivdo, "Right Man for the Job: Colonel Charles H. Karlstad," *Veritas* 8, no. 1 (2012): 77–78.

Col. Otis E. Hayes took command of the former, having moved to Fort Bragg from his position as the Army General School's Psychological Warfare Division deputy in Kansas. The Psy-Ops Department emerged to "instruct and train selected individuals, officers, and noncommissioned officers as specialists in propaganda operations and as key persons in psychological warfare units."<sup>11</sup> The needs of this department superseded the needs of the Special Forces department. In addition to Psy-Ops and Special Forces, the Psychological Warfare Board evaluated and reported on the school's necessary doctrine, tactics, and procedures for future review.

The Special Forces Division taught the fundamentals of unconventional warfare, emphasizing guerrilla operations. Col. Aaron Bank oversaw the advancement of this department and produced the Army's first Special Forces Group, the 10th SFG. Bank's experience with the Jedburgh teams in World War II and the Army Rangers in Korea allowed him to develop the early Special Forces program. Bank outlined the Table of Organization and Equipment for future Special Forces. He designated one group—the "A" Team—to "carry out the operational concept of organizing and equipping; instructing; and leading, when necessary, extensive resistance/guerrilla forces." Another group assisted the "A" Team activities, while a final group of a limited number directly coordinated and worked with indigenous forces behind the lines.<sup>12</sup> Special Forces members "had to acquire one or more basic occupational specialties: operations and intelligence, engineering, weaponry, communications, and medical aid."<sup>13</sup> The training program began by determining the individual's specialty within these required occupations. Once personnel learned their specialty skill, they then learned basic elements of the other specialties of

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<sup>11</sup> Paddock, 142.

<sup>12</sup> Bank, 161.

<sup>13</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 48.



their teammates. This training preceded further instruction on covert operations training for intelligence gathering, sabotage, escape and evasion missions, and security.

Overall, the objectives of the Special Forces program involved “developing indigenous guerrilla forces, conducting operations behind enemy lines, and [sustaining] these operations for an indefinitely long time.”<sup>14</sup> The emphasis on guerrilla warfare, escape and evasion, subversive activities, and working with indigenous peoples separated the Special Forces units from Rangers and Commandos. Whereas those units conducted shallow penetration behind enemy lines, their primary missions included harassing and raiding the enemy and were performed solely by US personnel. The Army Special Forces handle indigenous guerrillas and civilians by aiding in the planning and implementation of guerrilla operations, civil affairs work, and gathering intelligence information from these populations for psychological warfare efforts.<sup>15</sup> As early as 1951, the Army expressed a general approval over the progress and usefulness of Bank’s Special Forces organization.

Bank understood the need for experience and training for any special operations group. The 10th SFG trained with Special Operations Forces from multiple countries in Western and Central Europe and the Middle East to create a foundational knowledge of special operations duties before deployment.<sup>16</sup> Although the 10th SFG formed as a direct consequence of special operations failures in Asia, the desired implementation of these groups was in Europe. The Army assigned the 10th SFG to Germany in November 1953 to help support the growing resistance efforts of East German workers. The failure of FEC to request and employ appropriately trained

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<sup>14</sup> Paddock, 127.

<sup>15</sup> Sutherland, 36.

<sup>16</sup> Nadel and Wright, 33.

Special Forces in Korea undoubtedly caused many of the irregular operations' failures that lasted throughout the war.

The emergence in 1952 of the 10th SFG—the first trained Special Forces unit in the history of the United States Army—should have led to a wealth of experience and structural development for special operations activities during the Korean War. Instead, the failure to properly employ these new Special Forces personnel only seemed to prove to conventional military commanders that psychological and unconventional warfare held no place among the legacy of the United States Armed Forces. In late 1952, some of these Special Forces members met with partisan groups, but this likely occurred too late in the war to benefit their guerrilla activities.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the Army assigned most SFG troops sent to Asia to command and staff offices within FEC. By placing these officers in FEC and not directly in charge of partisan operations, the US military “did not adhere to the organizational structure that the Army had created for the support and direction of guerrilla operations.”<sup>18</sup> Echoing the experiences of many World War II veterans, the Army improperly employed SFG personnel. Their unconventional warfare training became useless to partisans and US personnel on the ground.

Meanwhile, the union of psychological and unconventional warfare did not occur smoothly within the Psychological Warfare School. The Army respected psywar capabilities; it did not respect irregular warfare operations, especially those pertaining to guerrilla warfare.<sup>19</sup> However, this preference for psywar training likely benefitted the development of the Special Forces Groups. The Army and FEC paid greater attention to psychological warfare training than

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<sup>17</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 51.

<sup>18</sup> Pachall, *Command and Control*, 30. This quote refers to FM 31-21, 67.

<sup>19</sup> Paddock, 147.

they did to Special Forces. With less oversight on unconventional warfare training, the Special Forces department devoted more time to establishing its methods, training, and activities before emerging as the dominant field in later decades.

In October 1953, a few months after the Korean War, Army Field Forces attempted to deactivate the Psychological Warfare Center and return psywar training to Fort Riley. This action sought to do away with the Special Forces program and likely stemmed from the poor experiences of the 10th SFG in Korea.<sup>20</sup> The Army's poor impression of psychological and unconventional warfare in Korea undoubtedly affected its willingness to expand the organization further. McClure vigorously defended the retention of the center and the continued development of psychological and irregular warfare for future Cold War conflicts. His defense held; the center remained open.

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<sup>20</sup> Haas, *In the Devil's Shadow*, 67–68. Traditional Army commanders pointed to the Special Forces Group's failures in Korea as grounds for dismissing the entire program. However, this ignores the context of their introduction into the conflict. By the end of 1952, conventional military activities had largely ceased. Peace negotiations were well-underway by the time the Special Forces Group finished its training. Upon arrival to Korea, many SFG members were improperly employed to staff and command offices. Those employed to island campaigns grew frustrated over the lack of "meaningful offensive action" across North Korea. The Army's inability or unwillingness to engage in special operations work meant many of these men's unique capabilities went to waste. However, even if FEC and the Army properly applied the 10th SFG's skills, they were trained primarily for duties in Central European environments and not Southeast Asia.

## Conclusion

The Korean War challenged everything about the military's attitude towards psychological and irregular warfare. Before the World Wars, most military strategists believed that propaganda worked, but only when used to persuade rather than manipulate. The employment of unconventional or guerrilla methods received only hostility from traditional military organizations. During the World Wars, psychological warfare became a valuable tool in combating harmful ideologies and communicating with populations across large stretches of land and sea. Unconventional warfare developed during this time in response to civil unrest in regions across the world. However, by 1945, most military theoreticians and commanders viewed psychological and unconventional warfare as non-important, inferior to the strategies and methodologies inherent to conventional war.

The relationship between warfare and society dramatically changed between World War II and the Korean War. With the advent of the atomic age, intelligence became a vital weapon that did not result in disastrous nuclear fallout. President Truman's military downsizing meant many crucial departments disappeared or became severely understaffed. The disbandment of the OSS and other military intelligence organizations resulted in a dramatic intelligence crisis in Southeast Asia by 1950. Similarly, After World War II, many world leaders urged a reevaluation of the "rules" of war. Specific mentions of civilian combatants in warfare appeared in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 for this reason. The emergence of guerrillas in Korea highlights the shrinking distinction between soldier and civilian in modern conflicts.

The Chinese began supporting pro-Communist guerrillas in South Korea, and the unprepared and under-staffed ROK Army worked tirelessly to combat these guerrillas with their

basic conventional tactics. The violence that occurred during these efforts resulted in an estimated 30,000 civilian deaths between 1948–1950.<sup>1</sup> Fears of irregular troops dressed as fleeing refugees made it difficult for UN forces to distinguish between civilians and disguised guerrillas. The mass killings of civilians in Korea, whether through unwritten commands to shoot refugees or simply the mistake of frightened, under-prepared UN troops, remains a disputed topic among historians and academics.<sup>2</sup> Psychological and guerrilla warfare became essential components of the war long before American troops stepped foot on the Korean peninsula, if only because warfare changed so dramatically between 1945–1950.

Many prominent commanders, officers, and Koreans advanced the Army's development of special operations capabilities throughout the war. Gen. Robert McClure pushed relentlessly to establish a Psychological Warfare Division within the US Army and a school to train personnel for the future development of Army psywar efficiency. As psywar operations became more advanced in the early months of the war, McClure arranged psychological warfare training for all US Army staff within the Office of the Chief of Psychological Warfare, not just Army specialists in the Military Intelligence Reserves.<sup>3</sup> Col. John H. McGee led the screening process

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<sup>1</sup> Dong-Choon Kim, "Forgotten War, Forgotten Massacres—The Korean War (1950–1953) as Licensed Mass Killings," *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 4 (2004): 528.

<sup>2</sup> Civilian deaths in Korea became widely discussed in 1999 when reports of a mass shooting of civilians under a bridge outside the village of No Gun Ri appeared in the *New York Times*. Since then, historians and scholars continue to discuss the disastrous policies and mistakes made in Korea and the consequences that can and should be faced. See Robert L. Bateman, *No Gun Ri: A Military History of the Korean War Incident* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002); Charles J. Hanley, et al., *The Bridge at No Gun Ri: A Hidden Nightmare from the Korean War* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2001); Sahr Conway-Lanz, *Collateral Damage: Americans, Noncombatant Immunity, and Atrocity after World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Christopher D. Booth, "Prosecuting the 'Fog of War'?: Examining the Legal Implications of an Alleged Massacre of South Korean Civilians by US Forces during the Opening Days of the Korean War in the Village of No Gun Ri," *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 33, no. 4 (2000): 933–986; John S. Brown, "No Gun Ri Revisited: Historical Lessons for Today's Army," *Army History* 55, no. 1 (2002): 20–25.

<sup>3</sup> Sandler, *Cease Resistance*, 215.

for the Army Raiders and developed the Army Ranger and the United Nations Partisans Infantry programs. Donkey unit leaders like Chang Chae Hwa, Pak Choll, and Lee Jung Hok showed the benefits of working with indigenous forces in hostile territory.<sup>4</sup> Col. Aaron Bank developed the first Special Forces Groups in the US Army, and Col. Charles Karlstad oversaw training at the US Psychological Warfare School at Fort Bragg. Conventional military commanders considered these men “wild-eyed nuts.”<sup>5</sup> However, the necessities of unconventional warfare that arose in Korea suggested the changing nature of war in the modern world. Despite the aggression of the military traditionalists, these military and civilian leaders represented the future of modern warfare through the programs they created.

Many official military and government reports and historical analyses of psychological and guerrilla warfare efforts of the US Army during the Korean War present them as abject failures. Problems with the training of irregular units, the command structure, improper employment of special operations personnel, and a lack of clear objectives and military doctrine severely limited the effectiveness of these groups. However, the activities of these organizations also provided a glimpse of the Army’s potential in unconventional warfare. The Army staff working with partisan groups notably applied many of the later Special Forces strategies, including guerrilla warfare tactics behind enemy lines and working directly with the indigenous population. The ORO concluded that multiple factors limited the effectiveness of partisan activities. These included the inability of the Army to recognize and address the cross-cultural aspects of partisan warfare, lack of experienced or adequately trained personnel, lack of clearly defined mission objectives, and limited coordination between the Army and other military

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<sup>4</sup> Interviews with partisan leaders appear in Daley, 46–113.

<sup>5</sup> Evanhoe, 36.

branches.<sup>6</sup> The formation of the Psychological Warfare School at Fort Bragg provided a solution for many of these problems affecting the unconventional warfare units in Korea.

The development of today's US Army Special Operations Forces directly relates to the failures of special operations in the early Cold War. Without these deficiencies, the growth and development of the program might have taken a very different path. The efforts of leaders like McClure, McGee, Bank, and many others produced the Special Forces programs of the present. By the end of 1956, the Special Warfare section of the Psychological Warfare Center became the dominant field. The school's name changed to reflect this shift in priority: the US Army Special Warfare Center and School. The units that came out of this school included the famed Green Berets of the Vietnam War. Special Forces units led Asian resistance movements against the Communist thrust into Indochina, Malaya, South Korea, and other Southeast Asian nations.<sup>7</sup> The covert operations, support of resistance movements, and interest in intelligence that occurred in later conflicts echo the tactics of Korean War special operations. Although the school has changed considerably over time, the US Army Special Forces units exist today because of the failures and developments of Korean War psychological and unconventional warfare.

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<sup>6</sup> Cleaver, et al., 3.

<sup>7</sup> Sandler, *Free from Oppression*, 53–54.

## Appendix: Partisan Airborne Operations, 1951–1953

Point	Code name	Date	No. of men	No. of teams	Mission
①	Virginia I	15 Mar 51	24	1	Sabotage of rail and high-way traffic
②	Spitfire	18 Jun 51	16	1	Establish a guerrilla base
③	Mustang III	22 Jan 52	19	1	Sabotage of rail traffic
④	Mustang IV	16 Mar 52	16	1	Sabotage of rail traffic
⑤	Mustang V	14 May 52	20	2	Sabotage of rail and high-way traffic
⑥	Mustang VI				
⑦	Mustang VII	31 Oct 52	5	1	Sabotage of rail and high-way traffic
⑧	Mustang VIII	31 Oct 52	6	1	Sabotage of rail and high-way traffic
⑨	Jesse James I	30 Dec 52	10	3	Sabotage of rail and high-way traffic
⑩	Jesse James II	28 Dec 52	10	—	
⑪	Jesse James III	28 Dec 52	10	—	
⑫	Green Dragon	25 Jan 52 } <sup>?</sup>	97 <sup>a</sup>	1	Establish a guerrilla base from which to stage interior operations
⑬	Boxer I	7 Feb 53	12	4	Sabotage of rail traffic on east coast in conjunction with TF 95.2
⑭	Boxer II	7 Feb 53	12	—	
⑮	Boxer III	9 Feb 53	12	—	
⑯	Boxer IV	11 Feb 53	12	—	
⑰	Hurricane	31 Mar 53	5	1	Establish a guerrilla base
⑱	Rabbit I	1 Apr 53	40	23	Sabotage rail traffic
⑲	Rabbit II	6 Apr 53	6	—	
Total			389	40	

<sup>a</sup>Between late April and 19 May 1953, 56 or 57 more partisans sent in on this operation.

Source: Cleaver, et al., Table B14, page 93.



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